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By James Wood

AMERICA'S TASTEMAKER
By Jed Perl

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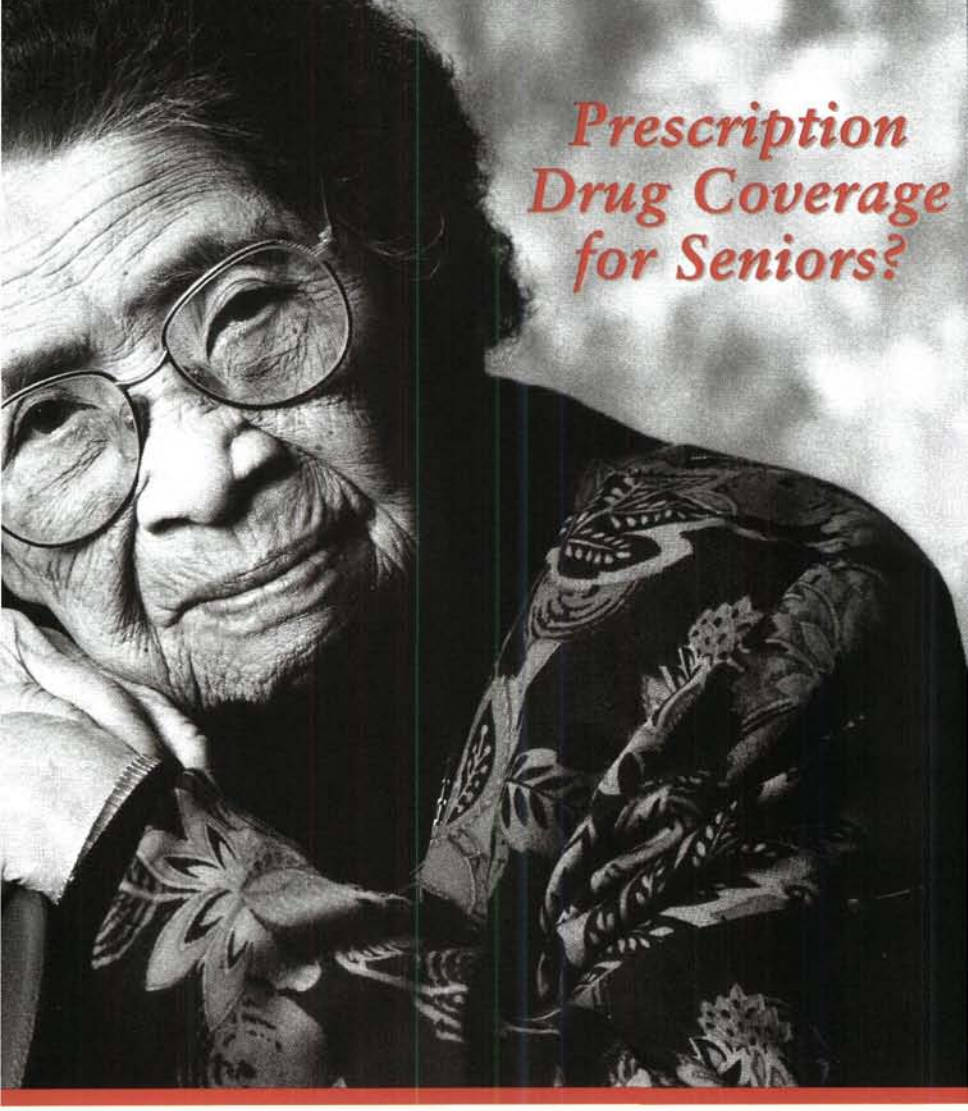

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Prescription drug coverage for seniors? It can be done ... It should be done!

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Journal of Politics and the Arts

WASHINGTON, D.C.
FEBRUARY 4, 2002
ISSUE 4,542

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On the Cover : Illustration by BILL MAYER
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THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 226, Number 4, Issue 4,542, February 4, 2002. (Printed in the United States on January 23, 2002.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated March 4 & 11, March 25 & April 1, July 8 & 15, August 5 & 12, August 19 & 26, September 9 & 16, December 2 & 9, 2002 and December 30, 2002 & January 6, 2003) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. For advertising inquiries, please contact Meredith Cossa at (202) 331-7494 or our NY sales office at (212) 465-8447. Yearly subscriptions, $59.94; foreign, $99.94 (U.S. funds); Canada, $79.94 (U.S. funds). Back issues, $4.00 (includes postage & handling). **© 2002 by The New Republic, Inc.** **(ISSN 0028-6583). Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Rights and permissions: fax (202) 331-0275. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Microform, Canadian Periodical Index, CD-ROM, issue, and article copies are available through University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone 1-800-521-0600. Postmaster: Send changes of address to The New Republic, P.O. Box 37298, Boone, IA 50037-0298. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope (e-mail address: tnr@aol.com). For subscription inquiries or problems call 1-800-827-1289 or visit our website at www.thenewrepublic.com.**

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CORRESPONDENCE

Nonsystem failure

TO THE EDITORS:

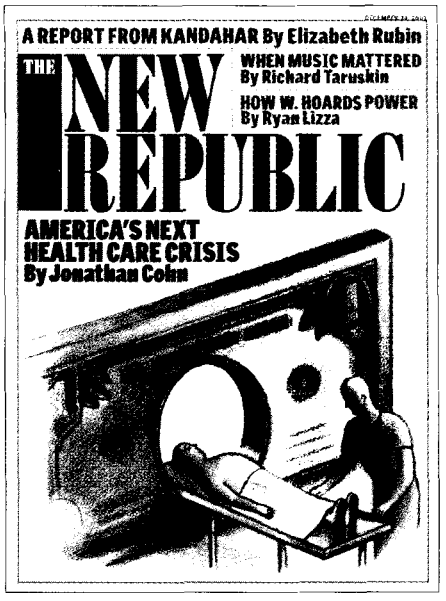
"Health Scare," by Jonathan Cohn, accurately describes the crisis faced by patients who must use the American health care "nonsystem" (December 24, 2001). The reason that the United States (unique among industrialized nations of the world) has such a large problem is our reluctance to adopt a universal-coverage system. Because Congress has neglected this problem for a decade, states like Maine and Maryland are taking the issue into their own hands. Until our nation adopts a "Medicare-for-all," single-payer health insurance system, they will be subjected to increased sharing of health care costs, a reduction in health benefits provided, and the risk of losing their health insurance at any time. Numerous studies have shown that a "Medicare-for-all" approach would reduce costs while providing access for all Americans to comprehensive health services from the patient's doctor of choice. The American Medical Student Association strongly supports this approach: one that recognizes health care as an essential human right.

JAYA AGRAWAL
National President
JEFF HUEBNER, M.D.
Jack Rutledge Fellow
American Medical Student Association
Reston, Virginia

Dividing line

TO THE EDITORS:

Sarah Wildman and I spoke for nearly an hour over a period of two days in November on matters of Indians, Indian-Americans, and their identities post-September 11 ("All for One," December 24). From those two conversations she chose to attribute to me two unintelligible remarks. Is it reasonable then to believe that it is easier to deal with bigots than to expect journalists to know what is fair and accurate reporting? What else can explain her choice to attribute this sentence to me: "Saying Islam is a religion of peace is classic monotheistic marketing"? Did Wildman wish to say that I told her that calling Islam a "religion of peace" is a classic case of marketing aggressive and proselytizing religions as peaceful religions? Or did she wish THE NEW REPUBLIC's readers to jump to the conclusion that an Indian-American professor at a small, Midwestern liberal arts university is only good for generating gibberish? The other line she attributes to me is a rude and gauche remark, which I am sure was Wildman's not-so-subtle


A REPORT FROM KANDAHAR By Elizabeth Rubin
THE NEW REPUBLIC
WHEN MUSIC MATTERED By Richard Taruskin
HOW W. HOARDS POWER By Ryan Lizza
AMERICA'S NEXT HEALTH CARE CRISIS By Jonathan Cohn

attempt at caricaturing me and my opinions about matters Indian and Indian-American.

Additionally, Wildman does not quote one non-Indian-American in her Washington Diarist. She tries to make the case for the "South Asianists," and could have indeed done so if even *one* of her interviewees were Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, or Nepali. Even if she had been able to rope in a lonely Bhutanese-American, she could have swayed her readers a little!

RAMESH N. RAO
Associate Professor, Communication
Truman State University
Kirksville, Missouri

SARAH WILDMAN RESPONDS:

Ramesh N. Rao and I did speak several times in November; on that we can agree. Not only were the quotes I attributed to him accurate, but they reflect sentiments expressed by him several times throughout our conversations. For example, he told me that Christianity and Islam were the "basis of conflict in the world" and that the "South Asian label" was "concocted [by the] State Department in the 1950s." As for his second point, I did speak to non-Indian South Asians who had embraced the South Asian label. Given space constraints, I couldn't quote from every interviewee.

Dissonant

TO THE EDITORS:

Shame on TNR for giving Richard Taruskin another forum for repeating his tired arguments against Dmitry Shostakovich ("Double Trouble," December 24, 2001). I write "against Shostakovich" because to deny the source of inspiration for the great majority of his post-1936 output—protest against oppression and especially the oppression he experienced firsthand from Stalin and his followers—is to deny the ultimate humanity and universality of Shostakovich's music that makes it such a powerful listening experience.

Taruskin, Laurel Fay, and a few others have made an industry of denying what everyone else—including and especially those who knew Shostakovich personally—has long accepted and understood. Solomon Volkov's *Testimony* may not be documented accurately enough to be correctly titled as Shostakovich's memoirs, but the book's claims about the music are borne out by the only meaningful test: listening to Shostakovich's compositions. How would Taruskin explain Shostakovich's writing a small-scale, satirical piece in 1945 (the Ninth Symphony)—when Stalin expected a grand victory symphony with full chorus—as anything but a protest (and one that cost its author dearly)? How does he explain Shostakovich writing a symphony immediately following Stalin's death in 1953 that culminates in repeated, triumphant exclamations of Shostakovich's own musical motto? Can this be anything other than Shostakovich celebrating his own success in surviving his, and his people's, tormentor?

Taruskin's article softens his earlier writing by asserting Shostakovich's "doubleness." But what's "double" about the above examples? As an ironist, Shostakovich had to first establish the forms that he wished to ridicule or tear down, such as the grotesque polka from *The Age of Gold* or the mock-triumphal ending of the Fifth Symphony. That does not mean there should be any confusion about the composer's point of view. To suggest that he meant for the ending of the Fifth Symphony, with its piercing high A from the violins that just won't stop, to feel jubilant as well as searing and overwhelming isn't "doubleness"; it's just double-talk. A parody of a triumphal finale is not also a celebratory movement simply because it has to use the standard form as a reference point.

The musical claims made in *Testimony* stand up because their veracity is obvious to all who have ears to hear and a soul with which to comprehend. Taruskin and Fay can rail about technicalities in the way the book was compiled but, to paraphrase Galileo, Shostakovich's music moves us nonetheless.

JAMES GINSBURG
Chicago, Illinois

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The public is saying:
"No more Drug War!"

A recent Ridder/Braden opinion poll in the state of Colorado shows:[1]

73% of voters believe we should decrease criminal penalties for possession of small quantities of drugs from a felony to a misdemeanor and spend the money saved on prisons to increase drug treatment and prevention.

85% believe the current war on drugs addresses the symptoms of drug abuse but fails to solve the underlying causes.

83% of Colorado voters believe we are losing the war on drugs.

A November national Zogby Poll indicated:

61% of the America public opposes arresting and jailing nonviolent marijuana smokers.

67% oppose the use of federal law enforcement agencies to close patient cooperatives where medical marijuana is legal under state law.[2]

Also, in the last three election cycles the public has approved fourteen state wide reform initiatives!

Why won't Congress listen?

[1] Ridder/Braden, Inc. July 2001. More information: contact The Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center, POB 1156, Boulder, CO 80306. See: http://www.prison-moratorium.org.
[2] Zogby International, December 2001. More information: contact the NORML Foundation, 202-483-8751.

Kevin B. Zeese, President, Common Sense for Drug Policy
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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

West Wing

FOR THE MEDIA, the dramas of campaign 2002 will be personal: Can George W. save his brother? Can Andrew Cuomo avenge his father? Can Elizabeth Dole match her husband? But the most important race won't be about personality at all—because neither California Governor Gray Davis nor his likely Republican opponent, Richard Riordan, has much of one. It will be about which party can transcend the parity of election 2000 and set itself on the road toward a political majority. Richard Riordan may be the Republicans' last chance.

Everyone knows that election 2000 revealed a country evenly split between the two parties. But an election is just a snapshot, a static picture of a dynamic polity. And as Ruy Texeira and TNR's John B. Judis suggest in their forthcoming *The Emerging Democratic Majority*, key Democratic groups—Latinos, highly educated professionals—are growing rapidly. By contrast, key GOP constituencies—rural voters, non-college-educated white men—are in relative decline. Bush's triumphant war on terrorism may have obscured these trends over the past few months, but it hasn't altered them. Democratic candidates won big last fall despite Bush's immense popularity, and recent polling shows that already terrorism is no longer the public's dominant political concern.

In fact, the war may actually hinder the GOP's long-term success by making it too ideologically self-satisfied. In recent years Democrats have proven more willing to make the ideological compromises necessary to encroach on Republican turf. The 1994 elections, which decimated Democrats in the South and West, convinced party leaders to throw out their litmus tests and field candidates who could win. By 1998, as Dana Milbank revealed three years ago in TNR, not only were national party officials tolerating anti-abortion, anti-gun-control Democrats in conservative House districts, but they were actually intervening in primaries to make sure they defeated their more liberal rivals. Anything to give the party a shot at picking up the seat.

That pragmatism has paid off. In recent years Democrats—once considered a dying species in the South—have won the governorships of Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Kentucky, and Virginia. They have done it with candidates so fiscally conservative that in many cases they actually ran to the *right* of their Republican opponents—often promising lotteries, which distribute money from the poor to educational programs targeted at the middle class. Last summer almost half the Democratic senators from states that George W. carried voted for his tax cut. And not only have Democratic leaders not retaliated against these renegades, but they have gone out of their way to protect them politically—refusing to call for the tax cut's repeal, in part because it might embarrass pro-tax-cut Democrats who face reelection this year, such as South Dakota's Tim Johnson and Montana's Max Baucus.

The GOP leadership, by contrast, has been much less sympathetic to Republicans in states that went for Al Gore. In March 2000, Republican House moderates grew so frustrated with the National Republican Congressional Committee's bias toward conservative candidates that they threatened to stop fund-raising for the party altogether. The Club for Growth, an anti-tax group, has warned moderate Republican members of Congress that unless they move to the right, they will face primary challengers. And there's reason to believe the threats are working. Last summer every Republican member of the House voted for President Bush's tax cut. The White House cheered, but given that some of those Republicans represent increasingly Democratic districts, their votes could put them out of step with their constituents.

And nowhere are Republicans more out of step than in California, where Democrats control the governor's mansion, both houses of the state legislature, a majority of the congressional delegation, and every statewide elected office save one. The reason is that California is less white, less rural, and better educated than most other states. It exaggerates the trends that favor Democrats all over the country.

After brutal beatings in the last three election cycles, some California Republicans are finally swallowing their pride and doing what the Democrats did after 1994: backing candidates who reject many of the party's ideological tenets. Their great hope is former Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan. Riordan is fiscally conservative and touts his business expertise. But on issues like abortion, gay rights, and immigration, he would make Paul Wellstone swoon. The combination seems to be working. Polls show Riordan running even with incumbent Democratic Governor Gray Davis.

But Riordan can't win unless conservatives turn out on Election Day, and unless the national Republican Party aggressively assists his campaign. And therein lies the GOP's fateful decision. If it abandons Riordan, it will remain moribund in California, putting Republican presidential candidates at a permanent disadvantage. What's more, it will have rejected perhaps the best model for long-term success in a host of other states—for instance, New Jersey, where the national GOP's rightward drift is increasingly making Republicans an endangered species—that are following California's demographic lead.

If Riordan wins, on the other hand, the most powerful Republican outside Washington will disagree with core Republican principles. As governor of America's largest state, Riordan would have the political platform that his ideological soulmate Rudy Giuliani lacked. And he could conceivably launch the first serious liberal Republican presidential bid in a generation, a bid that would shake the GOP to its bones. Instead of Republican expansion, a Riordan governorship could produce Republican fratricide.

My guess is that won't happen because conservatives won't give Riordan the support he needs to win this fall. Parties don't swallow painful heresies unless they realize they are in trouble. And two fluke events—the Florida recount and the terrorist attack—have conspired to shield Republicans from the reality that their party probably is. Election 2000 was the third straight presidential election in which the Democratic candidate won more votes than the Republican. In the 1980s three straight losses forced the Democratic Party to reinvent itself. But in 2000 the Supreme Court turned a Republican loss into a Republican victory, and so the GOP was allowed the illusion that it had reconnected with the American people. Last summer James Jeffords's defection from the GOP—and the overwhelming evidence that on the issues people cared about most (health care, Social Security, education, the environment), conservative stances enjoyed little public support—led some Republicans to worry about the party's long-term health. But then came September 11, which sent Bush's approval ratings into the stratosphere—and convinced many Republicans they didn't need to change one bit.

So Richard Riordan is a radical solution to a problem Republicans don't admit they have. That's why I don't think he'll win. And as he goes down, he may take the GOP's dreams of becoming America's majority party down with him.

PETER BEINART

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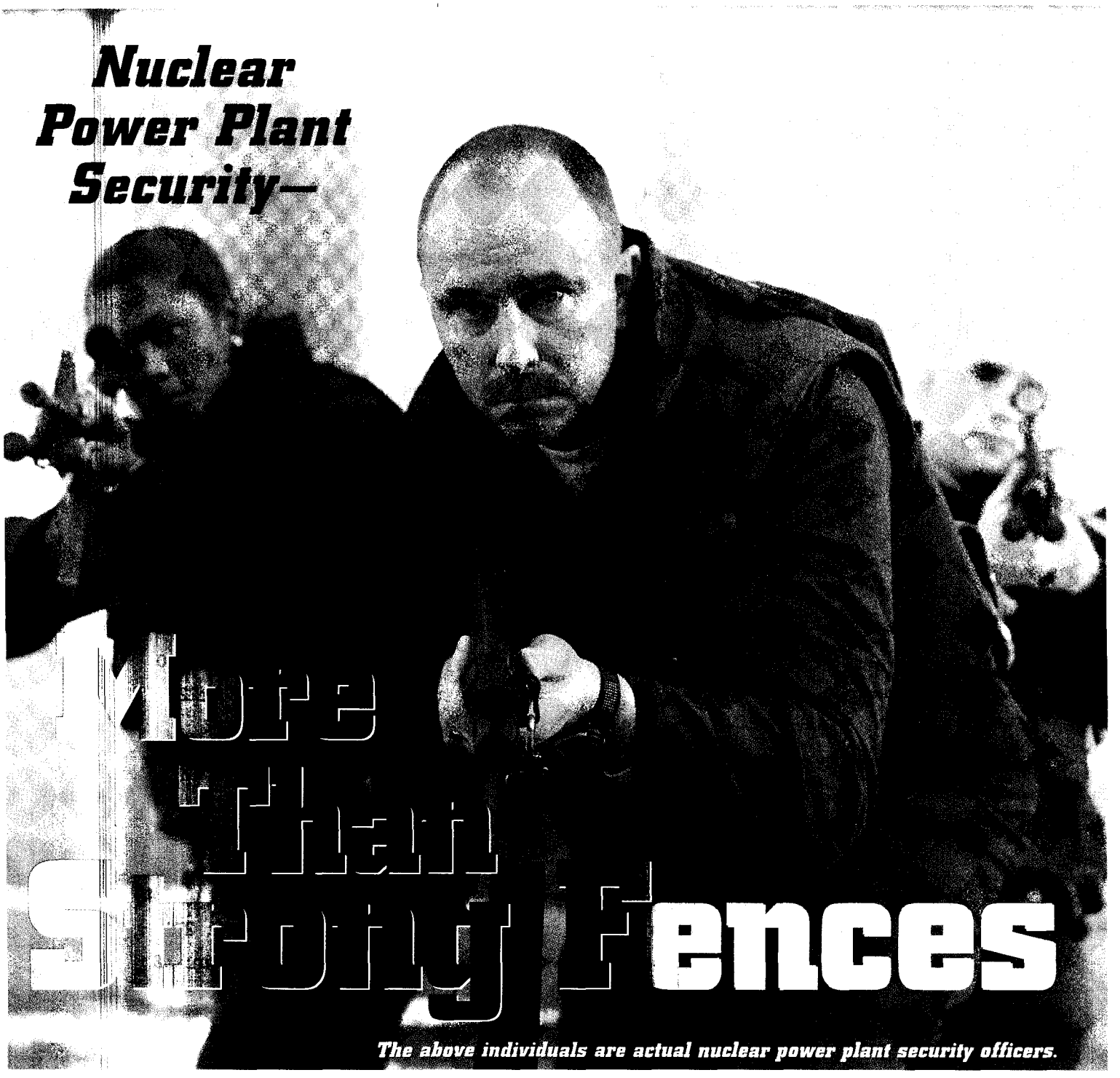
Nuclear Power Plant Security—



More than strong fences

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Nuclear power plant security – it's about more than strong fences.

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C-SPAN by the Numbers

Number of U.S. homes with cable and satellite that receive MTV: **83,400,000**

Number of U.S. homes that receive C-SPAN: **85,000,000**

MSNBC's rank among U.S. cable television networks, based on distribution: **34**

C-SPAN's rank, based on distribution: **8**

Average weekly audience for *West Wing*, 2000–2001 season: **17,012,000**

Estimated number of people watching C-SPAN each week: **28,500,000**

Percentage of Americans who voted in 2000 election: **51%**

Percentage of C-SPAN viewers who voted in 2000: **90%**

2001 salary budget for New York Yankees: **$109,791,893**

2001 operating budget for C-SPAN networks: **$36,200,000**

Number of people who work for Library of Congress: **4,083**

Number of people who work for C-SPAN: **282**

Miles traveled by 2 C-SPAN "School Buses" while visiting U.S. schools: **422,857**

Circumference of Earth, in miles: **24,901**

Hours of original programming produced annually by 11 Discovery networks: **2,100**

Hours of original programming produced in 2001 by 3 C-SPAN networks: **7,222**

U.S. House debates, as percentage of C-SPAN programming in 2001: **13%**

Hours of secret Nixon White House tapes housed at National Archives: **3,700**

Hours of programming stored in C-SPAN's archive: **167,267**

Number of cameras that late-night comedians say C-SPAN owns: **1**

Number of cameras C-SPAN actually owns: **78**

Number of books featured on Oprah's Book Club since its September 17, 1996 debut: **46**

Number of books featured on C-SPAN's *Booknotes* since September 17, 1996: **271**

Number of cases argued before the U.S. Supreme Court during 2000–2001 term: **86**

Number of times C-SPAN was permitted to televise those cases: **0**

Number of viewer phone calls aired by C-SPAN last year: **25,000**

Number of pastries served in 2001 to guests fielding those phone calls: **2,920**

Percentage of cable customers with access to C-SPAN: **97%**

License fees paid by cable companies to support C-SPAN since 1979: **$384,111,000**

Federal taxpayer dollars ever received by C-SPAN: **$0**

Sources are available at c-span.org

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Eastern Alliance

ON NOVEMBER 12, in the corridors of the United Nations, Colin Powell crossed paths with Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi. But unlike every secretary of state since 1979, Powell didn't snub his Iranian counterpart; rather, he shook his hand. The message was unmistakable: The State Department wants U.S.-Iranian détente. It's a goal Foggy Bottom has pursued in private—last year its policy planning office unsuccessfully lobbied against renewing Iranian sanctions (see "Oil Spill," by Lawrence F. Kaplan, July 23, 2001). And they've pursued it in public as well—State blessed the participation of Iranian diplomats in the Bonn conference that created Afghanistan's interim government. As Powell explained in December, "We have been in discussions with the Iranians at a variety of levels and in some new ways since September 11."

And what has this new era of good feelings produced? On January 3, Israeli navy SEALS intercepted a 50-ton shipment of arms destined for the Palestinian Authority. Israeli intelligence officials say the arms came from Iran, and why not? The ship left from the Iranian island of Keish, and many of the munitions it carried—Katyushas, mines, and missiles—were manufactured in Iran. Then there are Iran's recent actions in Afghanistan. Since the Taliban's fall, according to a January 10 article in *The New York Times*, Iranian operatives have bribed Afghan warlords near the western city of Herat in an effort to undermine the pro-American government of Hamid Karzai. According to the *Times*, Iran has also given safe harbor to some fleeing members of Al Qaeda. And, of course, Iran has continued its headlong pursuit of nuclear weapons. As former Iranian president Hashemi Rafsanjani proclaimed last month: "If the day comes when the world of Islam is equipped with weapons similar to those that Israel possesses ... nothing will remain after one atom bomb is dropped on Israel."

The strategic rationale behind America's courting of Tehran isn't hard to understand: We're finishing a war on Iran's eastern border and may soon fight one on its western border (the one with Iraq). Having good relations with the major power in the region makes both efforts easier. But the United States can't have better relations with Iran unless Iran has better relations with us—that is, when it stops threatening our friends and denouncing our way of life. Ever since the 1997 election of self-described reformer Mohammed Khatami, American policymakers have been waiting for that to happen. And it's true that Khatami, who spouts homilies about a "Dialogue of Civilizations," is a charming, erudite man. Unfortunately he is also a timid and powerless one. The State Department itself reported last year that "Iran remained the most active state sponsor of terrorism." And instead of ushering in a new ethos of tolerance, Khatami has watched silently as the regime rounds up its critics. According to the Paris-based Reporters Without Borders, Iran now holds more journalists in its prisons than any other country.

This is not to say that Iran's theocracy is impregnable. The past six months have witnessed unprecedented displays of dissidence—thousands have protested in the streets and universities against the mullahs who run Iran, and even against Khatami, their palatable public face. These are the first signs of a growing demographic quandary for the regime: Two-thirds of Iranians have no memory of Mohammed Reza Pahlavi's autocracy. Railing against the Great Satan doesn't inspire them, because they didn't live through the CIA's deposing of Mohammed Mossadegh or the capriciousness of the shah's American-trained secret police.

Ultimately, trying to buttress Mohammed Khatami may prove as counterproductive—both strategically and morally—as buttressing Mikhail Gorbachev in the late 1980s. It would make more sense for the United States to stop apologizing for the current regime and to begin speaking out about its repression—for instance, the arrest of 60 reformist politicians and intellectuals charged with conspiring to overthrow the Islamic system, and the house arrest of the dissident cleric Ayatollah Hosein Ali Montazeri. The United States could also make overtures to genuinely secular, liberal leaders like the shah's son, Reza Pahlavi (see "Successor Story," by Franklin Foer, January 14). And it could apply some real pressure to President Bush's new friend, Vladimir Putin, to convince Russia to stop aiding Iran's nuclear program.

But before any of that can happen, the Bush administration—and particularly the Bush State Department—must start seeing the regime in Tehran for what it is, not what we'd like it to be. "By and large, the Iranian role diplomatically has been quite constructive," Richard Haass, the State Department's director of policy planning, recently announced. If by constructive he means promoting fundamentalism in Afghanistan, menacing Israel, and arming terrorists, then he's right. And terribly wrong. ■

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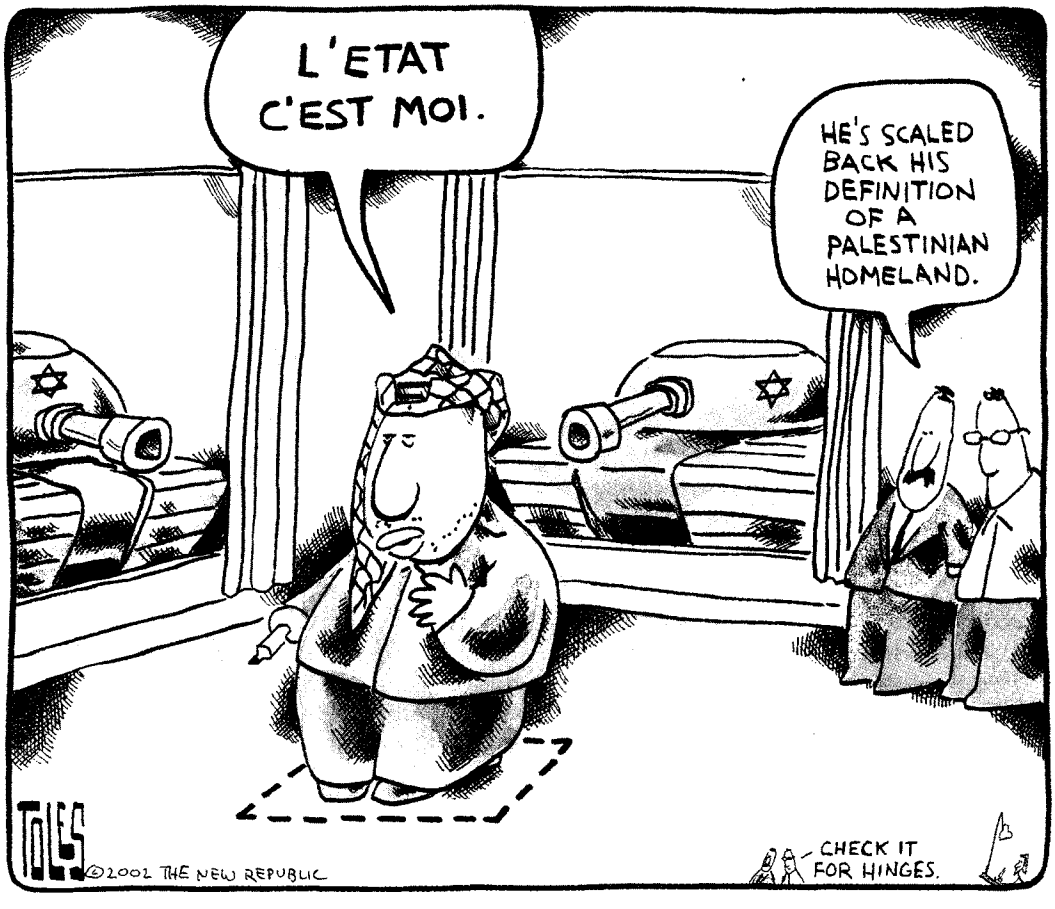
NOTEBOOK

DETAILS, DETAILS: What is it about Enron that makes George W. Bush so careless with the facts? First there was his amnesic appearance before reporters in the Oval Office in which he suggested that he hadn't really known Enron CEO Ken Lay (a.k.a., "Kenny Boy") before 1994, and that Lay had backed Bush's opponent, Ann Richards, in that year's Texas gubernatorial campaign. Short of the most Clintonian parsing, both statements were untrue. On Tuesday, making his most extensive remarks about Enron to date, he stated: "There has been a couple of contacts [from Enron officials] with people in my cabinet." Ummm, maybe a couple dozen. By the most recent (but still presumably incomplete) count, top officials who spent time on the phone with Enron executives last fall include Don Evans, Paul O'Neill, Spencer Abraham, Mitch Daniels, Alan Greenspan, and Peter Fisher. Bush then claimed that his Labor secretary (a notable—and telling—exception to the list of officials who had been in touch with Enron) had been dealing with the Enron crisis "before anybody started paying attention to Enron." Again, not quite. The Labor Department announced its investigation three days *after* Enron filed for bankruptcy. By that point, the company's collapse had already been chronicled in print and on television for months. Finally, Bush played the victimized-mother-in-law card, asserting that Laura's mom had bought Enron stock "last summer." Later that day a low-level aide was dispatched to the press section of *Air Force One* to sheepishly explain that the stock was actually bought in 1999. Are these major mistakes? Elements of an unsuccessful cover-up? Signs of a man who has trouble telling the truth? Probably not. But we seem to remember a certain presidential candidate who did not get that benefit of the doubt after making a small factual error in a politically useful invocation of his mother-in-law. (Prescription drugs and a dog, anyone?) Al Gore's misstatements may have cost him the presidency; Bush has thus far gotten a free ride. Chalk another one up to low expectations.

ELECTORAL RECOUNT: Curtis Gans, director of the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate, is the Jeremiah of the pundit class. Every election cycle he issues a report bemoaning the decline in voter turnout and the sorry state of our democracy. "The underpinnings of American democracy ... are coming apart," he wrote more than a year ago in a typical screed published in *The Washington Monthly*. "Every biennium American politics seems to produce new modern records for citizen political disengagement." Gans's calculations showing a 25 percent decline in turnout since 1960 have won him frequent appearances on NPR and CNN, and quotes in *The Washington Post*. But there's a reason Gans is so pessimistic about the health of the polity: He uses lousy math. In last month's *American Political Science Review*, academics Michael McDonald and Samuel Popkin published a decisive refutation of Gans's dour outlook. Gans, they point out, measures the turnout of the voting-age population. But this count, McDonald and Popkin argue, includes a growing population of unnaturalized immigrants and felons who can't legally cast ballots. When they removed these noneligible adults from the equation, McDonald and Popkin found that turnout has essentially remained constant since the 1930s—at about 55 percent of eligible voters. "[T]he turnout rate is not in free fall," they argued in a *Washington Post* op-ed summarizing their findings. "When we looked at the adjusted data and voting patterns, we found no evidence of a systemic, ongoing decline in turnout due to disillusionment, negative advertising, diminished interest in news watching, globalization or anything else." If anything's coming apart, it seems, it's the underpinnings of Curtis Gans.



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WHAT A DIFFERENCE A DAY MAKES: "UNEASE GROWS IN PHILIPPINES ON U.S. FORCES"—*New York Times* headline, January 19

"U.S. MISSION LIFTS FILIPINO HOPES FOR PEACE"—*New York Times* headline, January 20

JEWISH CONSPIRACY THEORY I: "The US media campaign against the interests of Arabs and Muslims and the American public opinion on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could be influenced through a sustained lobbying and PR effort.... The US media has been reporting Israelis defending themselves from rebels disrupting their stability. So public opinion is bigger in my opinion. No wonder the people of the US side with Israel."—Neil Bush, brother of the president, quoted by Arab News at a conference in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, January 22

JEWISH CONSPIRACY THEORY II: "Rep. James Traficant (D-Ohio) wants to delve into the ethnic and religious backgrounds of potential jurors at his upcoming trial [on fraud, racketeering, and other charges] and has signaled that he may seek to keep Jewish individuals off his jury because of the assistance he gave to an accused Nazi war criminal.... Traficant expressed apprehension about a Jewish backlash during a pretrial hearing earlier this month, saying he was concerned that his well-publicized support of John Demjanjuk would be held against him.... During an October 1990 nationally televised 'Phil Donahue' show taped in Youngstown, Traficant said of a member of the audience who criticized him, 'That man is of the Jewish descent,' according to news accounts at the time."—*Roll Call*, January 17

IDIOCY WATCH, CONT'D: "Recently there have been a number of news items about George W. Bush's Arab bodyguard being thrown off a plane. They mostly focus on the question of whether racial profiling of Arab gunmen is appropriate.... My question is one that no one seems to have asked: *Why* does W. have an Arab bodyguard anyway? .... Anwar Sadat was assassinated by his own troops (Bin Laden and friends have been linked to that incident). But Sadat didn't have any choice about being guarded by Arabs. Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguard. She did have a choice about being guarded by Sikhs, rather than Hindus, at a time when her troops were engaged in clearing Sikh terrorists out of the Sikh temple. In bullet-riddled retrospect, *her choice was wrong*.... What makes *me* [upset]—even madder than heck—is that Bush, who is involved in a War on Arab Terrorism, is so politically correct that he apparently sees nothing wrong with being guarded by a man who may decide, on principle, to kill him.... When FDR interned and relocated Japanese and Japanese-Americans in WWII, he was responding to the massive sneak attack on Pearl Harbor. He was basing his decision on the well-known fact that blood is thicker than water, and that people frequently put loyalty to family and religion over loyalty to the state."—James Fulford, writing in *VDARE.com*, a project of Peter Brimelow's Center For American Unity, January 9

AND IF ANY OF THEM CAME FROM ENRON, I WANT THEM RETURNED TO PREVENT EVEN THE APPEARANCE OF IMPROPRIETY.
TOLES
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AND I WANT IT RETURNED FASTER THAN YOU CAN SAY 'CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM.'

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS: An article in the January 21 issue ("Lay Men," by Ryan Lizza) erroneously stated that the Bush administration had "repealed" the Clinton arsenic standard for drinking water last year. In fact, the administration, after suspending and reviewing the regulation, put it into effect on October 31. We regret the error. ■

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Could Bush do the right thing?

Air Pressure

By GREGG EASTERBROOK

AFTER 20 YEARS of government-bashing, there are still regulations that make you want to weep. One is the "new source" standard of the Clean Air Act (which actually governs *old* sources, but that's the least of its problems). The rule essentially exempts from regulation some refineries and a large group of antiquated, high-pollution power plants in the Midwest, as long as they don't undertake any significant improvements. If they do, they must immediately abide by stricter anti-pollution standards. The incentive is perverse: Keep your ancient pollution-pumping equipment as is, and you're fine. Upgrade anything—even in an effort to reduce pollution!—and you're in trouble with the Feds.

This cries out for change, and the Bush administration is currently considering two options. One, being pushed by Vice President Dick Cheney, would essentially let the Midwestern plants off the hook—allowing them to upgrade without having to meet Clean Air Act rules. *The New York Times* put this proposal on its front page last week under the headline "REGULATORS URGE EASING U.S. RULES ON AIR POLLUTION." The article described environmentalists as "vehement" that changing the "new source" standard "would amount to the biggest rollback of the Clean Air Act since its passage 30 years ago." And it suggested that nefarious corporate influence and insider string-pulling were behind the Cheney initiative. That may be partly true—corporations may indeed have pulled strings. But what the *Times* article didn't note until the tenth paragraph, and then only in passing, is that the administration is also considering an alternative proposal. This alternative, being pushed by Christie Todd Whitman at the Environmental Protection Agency, would actually *strengthen* regulatory standards and rapidly cut Midwestern pollution, while simplifying rules and reducing costs.

You'd think the *Times*, along with the Democratic Party and the enviro lobbies, would be enthusiastic about Whitman's efforts. You'd be wrong. Because the standard line is that W. is anti-environment (though, so far, he has upheld most Clinton-era green initiatives), everyone misses the fact that there is a significant faction within the Bush EPA and on the White House domestic policy staff that wants to *accelerate* environmental progress. And as a result, pro-environmental proposals like Whitman's, which has been under discussion for months and is expected to become public soon, are largely ignored. And what little recognition the Bush pro-environment faction receives is usually spun negatively. Indeed, last July the *Times* ran a murkily worded story about Whitman's ideas for fixing the Midwest plants problem, darkly emphasizing that changing the "new source" rule is supported by power utilities, and detailing the opposition by Democrats and environmentalists. "Environmental groups said they fear that the plan to simplify regulations" could "undercut" clean air progress, the article intoned—in 847 words never mentioning that the whole point of Whitman's idea is *less* pollution.

It's not clear which position—Whitman's progressive reform or Cheney's let-them-eat-soot stance—will ultimately win the president's favor. What is clear, sadly, is that neither the Democrats, nor the environmentalists, nor the media seem interested in distinguishing between the two.

FOR THE MOST part, the Clean Air Act of 1970 has been a triumph. All categories of air pollution (except for greenhouse gases, which no law covers) have steadily declined since the act was significantly strengthened in 1977 and again in 1990. Nationally, smog is down by about a third since the 1970s; Los Angeles recorded its cleanest-air summer on record in 2001. Carbon monoxide health advisories, common in Denver and New York City in the '70s, have been nearly eliminated in major cities. Today's typical new car emits just 1 percent as much pollution per mile traveled as a car built in 1970. An acid rain "trading" program, which lets utilities sell each other emissions permits, and thus decide for themselves how to reduce pollution, has cut acid rain so rapidly—by about 30 percent in the 1990s—that the whole issue has fallen off the national agenda.

But the "new source" rule is an exception to this happy story. It originated with amendments in 1977 requiring refineries and coal-fired power plants to make initial reductions in sulfur dioxide—which causes acid rain—and nitrogen oxide, a factor in smog. Utilities with old Midwestern power plants that use antiquated boilers and burn high-sulfur coal protested that instituting "stack scrubbers" at their facilities would be prohibitively expensive. (Modern anti-pollution hardware works well when engineered into new plants with efficient boilers, but can be hard to retrofit onto older generators.) Besides, the utilities argued, the plants were so old they would be retired in a few years anyway. So the 1977 amendments included a grandfather clause for Midwestern utilities. An asterisk required that if owners made any significant "modification" to the plants—thereby indicating plans to keep the facilities in service—then they must be brought up to the latest standards.

It wasn't long before it dawned on the Midwestern utilities that plants effectively exempt from the Clean Air Act enjoyed a cost advantage over cleaner, newer generating stations. Add to that the obstacles to building new power facilities—in particular, environmentalist and NIMBY lawsuits aimed at blocking new construction—and it's not hard to understand why the utilities decided to keep the dirty, old generating stations in operation. "These plants were only grandfathered in 1977 because it was assumed they were about to be replaced with better facilities anyway," says a former EPA administrator. "Twenty-four years later they are still running, and now it looks like they will still be running when Buck Rogers wakes up."

The result is that of the nation's 500 largest electricity-

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generating stations, 51 in the Midwest account for about a third of acid rain and nitrogen oxide emissions. And these emissions drift east, undermining Northeastern states' efforts to improve their air quality. Three years ago New York state sued, claiming the Midwestern emissions were preventing it from reaching federal air-improvement deadlines, and demanding an EPA crackdown. New Jersey, where Whitman was governor, filed a similar action. The "modification" clause, the Northeast states maintained, was being subverted: Utilities were adding boilers or turbines to the old generating stations but not bringing the facilities up to modern emissions standards. (Plant owners claimed that such changes were just "repairs.") Basically at the states' behest, Clinton's Justice Department filed suit against several utilities with old plants, and some settled. For example, in 2000 Dominion Virginia Power, which owns old plants in the Appalachian region of Virginia, agreed to cut emissions from its facilities by 70 percent. (The size of Dominion Virginia Power's promise shows just how much the old plants can improve through modernization.)

FAST FORWARD TO last year, when Bush took office and put Cheney in charge of his energy task force. The task force quickly asked Attorney General John Ashcroft to review any pending Justice Department lawsuits against the Midwest utilities. It asked Whitman to relax the "new source" rule and allow the old facilities to continue operating without meeting Clean Air Act standards. Environmentalists and the media were aghast: The Sierra Club decried Cheney's plan as "a pass to pollute" while the *Times* editorial page pronounced the Bush environmental record "generally deplorable." But the hand-wringing hasn't been borne out. Last week Ashcroft announced—contra Cheney—that lawsuits against the Midwest utilities would proceed. More importantly, Whitman rebelled against the energy task force as well—pushing ahead with a proposal not simply to repeal the "new source" rule but to replace it with something more effective.

In fact, she went further, hatching a plan to make all air-pollution regulation of utilities and refineries simpler—streamlined, but stricter. While "new source review" may be the most exasperation-inducing feature of the Clean Air Act, it's not the only one needing change. For instance, the Act includes five different, sometimes mutually contradictory, sets of air standards on power-generating plants. The red tape and legalese are enough to make even a conscientious utility manager tear his or her hair out. That one aspect of the Midwest plants controversy is governed by *Section 126* of the Clean Air Act pretty much tells you all you need to know.

So Whitman proposed a simplified system for refinery and power-plant regulation, one based on the highly successful acid rain reduction program. Industry would be given national "caps" that rolled all Clean Air Act requirements into a single standard, and then allowed to trade emission permits in order to achieve the cheapest or fastest means of reduction. Regulators, lawyers, and politicians would no longer have to figure out what constituted a "modification" of a facility, or dictate specific upgrades that plants must (or must not) take. As with the acid rain program, the cap system would require that refinery and power-plant emissions steadily decline. But so long as standards were met, industry would be free to work out the details without government meddling.

The idea is eminently sensible, and so, naturally, Democrats and environmental lobbyists have worked to discredit it from its inception. The most common tactic has been to malign Whitman's plan as a "rollback," emphasizing that existing regulations would be cast aside—which is true—without adding that they would be replaced with improved standards that result in less pollution. "We fully expect [Whitman] to announce an initiative that will have the effect of relaxing antipollution regulations," said John Walke, an official of the Natural Resources Defense Council, in a typically myopic statement.

Of course, the White House may reject Whitman's proposal and opt for Cheney's pro-polluter position. If so, Bush will deserve censure. In a rational political climate, the president would have a clear incentive to do the right thing and choose Whitman's plan, which represents the best kind of compromise: Industry gets simplified rules; the public gets cleaner air. Unfortunately, in today's climate, the press and the Democratic Party—its eyes on 2002 "wedge" issues—seem determined to ignore the difference between bad environmental ideas and good ones. ■

Looking for the next Enron.

Trading Places

By PETER EAVIS

ENRON WAS A uniquely bad company, and its demise was uniquely dramatic. But in the torrid business climate of the 1990s, the fancy footwork that propelled Enron to such dizzying and undeserved heights benefited other, smaller companies as well. Two stand out in particular: AmeriCredit, a frantically growing Texas-based lender that targets borrowers with tainted credit histories; and Calpine, which is trying to dominate the U.S. electricity market by building a massive fleet of modern power plants. Like Enron, both companies have seen their once high-flying stock prices plunge in recent months. Calpine's market worth is now $4 billion, down from a $17 billion peak last April; AmeriCredit's has fallen to $1.85 billion from an August 2001 high of $5 billion. They are staying afloat by financing themselves in the debt markets. But the reasons they grew so fast—and can still raise capital today—look suspiciously familiar and suspiciously flimsy. First: a powerful mythology, based on impressive earnings reports, which convinces market-watchers that the people running the companies are smarter and more innovative than everyone else. Second: the dubious accounting and sophisticated financial engi-

PETER EAVIS is a financial columnist at *TheStreet.com*.

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neering that produced those high earnings reports to begin with—and masks potential weaknesses. The only real guarantee we have that Calpine and AmeriCredit aren't built on sand is their auditors—PricewaterhouseCoopers for AmeriCredit and, you guessed it, Arthur Andersen for Calpine. In other words, get ready for the next Enrons.

Start with AmeriCredit, which has achieved stratospheric growth by making car loans to people at the bottom of the credit ladder. To be sure, AmeriCredit is not a huge company: Even at its peak valuation, its market worth was only one-tenth of Merrill Lynch's. But the company has garnered tremendous buzz because it has grown so fast in such a risky segment of the lending industry. In 2001 the Fort Worth-based lender increased its car-loan portfolio by a massive 51 percent—to $12.4 billion. Growth like that would normally worry investors. But it has had the opposite effect for AmeriCredit. Tom Brown, a top-ranked Wall Street analyst who now manages a hedge fund, is a big AmeriCredit fan. On his website, *bankstocks.com*, Brown wrote in January, "AmeriCredit spent 2001 demonstrating that it really does have a sustainable intellectual and competitive advantage." Even *The Wall Street Journal*'s normally well-informed "Heard On The Street" column recently took a positive view of the company, crediting it with an "ability to judge wisely its potential customers."

It's just this kind of myth-making that sent people running to Enron, too. "Enron has built unique and, in our view, extraordinary franchises in several business units in very large markets," Goldman Sachs analyst David Fleischer proclaimed early last year. Likewise, AmeriCredit's boosters believe the company's managers are far more talented than their competitors, and they point to AmeriCredit's innovative credit-scoring model, which, the company claims, enables it to pick the right borrowers and charge them the right rate. But competitors doubt that, in today's weak market, AmeriCredit could find enough appropriate borrowers among people with less-than-perfect credit histories to grow as fast as they have. And if AmeriCredit is lending a lot of money to people with risky credit histories, they could feel the pinch very soon, as the recession makes it harder for those people to pay back loans.

SLIPPERY ACCOUNTING HAS also propped up AmeriCredit's reputation. Enron repeatedly included estimated profits from long-term trades in its revenue statements, even though it hadn't received much of the cash. Likewise, AmeriCredit's accounting enables it to book up-front profits on loans the borrowers have yet to repay. This is a fully legal, but deeply mistrusted, accounting procedure. And if AmeriCredit's estimates of defaults prove overly optimistic, it may find itself having to mark down the value of its assets to reflect higher-than-expected losses. There's reason to believe the company is also massaging other key numbers. AmeriCredit has started to let more struggling borrowers skip payments. This may seem kind in a recession, and AmeriCredit says most of the people who get these deferrals eventually get back on their payment schedule. But it's also possible that the company is reluctant to declare them in default because it wants to avoid booking the losses.

AmeriCredit's biggest similarity with Enron, though, is the sophisticated financial arrangements it has set up to raise money. Enron moved assets from its balance sheet to obscure "special purpose vehicles," or trusts, with names like Marlin and Osprey. These trusts then issued over $3 billion worth of bonds, whose proceeds ultimately flowed back to Enron. However, these bonds had to be immediately repaid if Enron's stock fell below a certain level and if its credit rating fell to junk status, which happened in November. In fact, the triggers in these trusts were one of the main reasons for Enron's collapse.

There's nothing sinister or unusual about the type of trusts AmeriCredit uses, but, like Enron's, they do contain potentially lethal triggers, which appear close to being set off. AmeriCredit, like many financial companies, packages its loans into bonds that it then sells through trusts. The proceeds from the bond sales flow back to AmeriCredit. Built into the trusts, however, are provisions designed to protect the bonds' buyers from a deterioration in credit quality. For example, if past-due loans or defaults in a trust rise above a certain level, the size of the trust's cash reserve must be increased. Now AmeriCredit is getting very close to setting off the past-due loan trigger on several bonds. If that occurs on enough trusts, the insurance company that guarantees AmeriCredit's bonds could refuse to keep backing them and the company could face extinction.

CALPINE ALSO BENEFITED from can't-lose mythology. In fact, in recent years Wall Street analysts have treated its top managers like visionaries. In late 2000 Goldman's Jon Raleigh gushed that Calpine was "going to be the fastest growing company in their universe." Like Enron, it had a swashbuckling approach to growth and a desire to revolutionize the energy market. Calpine's aim was to build as many of its state-of-the-art power plants as possible, and it was sure that robust economic growth and higher Internet usage would lead to exponentially increased demand for them. In early 1999 Calpine said it wanted to build plants with a total generating capacity of 15,000 megawatts. By the end of the year that had risen to 25,000; by early 2001 the new target was a staggering 70,000 megawatts, which is a little less than half of all the new generation capacity expected to be built between now and 2005. Analysts and investors lapped it all up. In the week after the 70,000-megawatt goal was announced, Calpine stock soared more than 20 percent. Chris Ellinghaus, an analyst at The Williams Capital Group, acknowledged that the goal made Calpine "the most aggressive power plant developer in North America," but reassured his clients that it was also probably "the best and most successful."

Problem is, these estimates were wildly unrealistic. Already, in January, the San Jose, California-based company decided to cap its build-out program at 26,000 megawatts. Though Calpine has slammed on the brakes, it's left holding a mountain of debt, estimated at $14 billion. The question now is whether the power plants can generate the cash flows to pay back that debt. Skeptics say it can't and claim that

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Calpine is using tricky accounting to mask its problems. *The New York Times* recently questioned the way Calpine books trading profits. Looking forward, the company will only say how much it expects to earn from power sales in the open market in 2002, which constitute an expected 35 percent of total sales. But, showing Enron-like fuzziness, it refuses to reveal its margin for the 65 percent it has already agreed to sell in long-term contracts this year. We know that some of those contracts are with the state of California, where the evaporation of the energy crisis has sent the prices of natural gas and electricity downward. This was one of the overlooked causes of Enron's decline, and it is probably also clobbering Calpine. Clearly, with power profits weak, the company will face a severe crunch this year.

And there's one more piece of evidence that Calpine and AmeriCredit may be headed Enron's way: Their top execs are unloading company stock. Within the past twelve months, AmeriCredit's founder and chairman, Clifton Morris, has filed to sell stock valued at over $20 million; Calpine's founder and CEO, Peter Cartwright, has filed to sell more than $10 million worth. Sadly, Enron may have been far from alone. ■

Enron and the need for campaign finance reform.

Reform School

By Jonathan Chait

Does the Enron scandal prove we need campaign finance reform? Of course it does. When a corporation that has insinuated itself into the political process through a massive combination of financial donations and high-pressure lobbying is revealed to have built its fortune on a stack of lies, it's no great leap to think that the system of political influence it exploited shares some of the blame.

Yet not everybody sees it this way. The lack of evidence that the White House intervened to save Enron after it began to falter—the lack of a "smoking quid pro quo"—has led some to conclude that Enron's Washington influence did no good at all. "[W]hat did the Bush administration do to return the favor? Apparently, nothing," reported *The Wall Street Journal* last week. "Of the many bad financial decisions Enron made, investing $2.4 million in the 2000 political elections now looks, in retrospect, like a conspicuously bad one." Campaign reform opponents, not surprisingly, agree. "If anything," says House GOP election honcho Tom Davis, "Enron shows that money doesn't buy special influence." But this argument, while charmingly counterintuitive, happens to be wrong. The Enron debacle could not have occurred were it not for the stranglehold that it and other special interests enjoy over our political system.

The trouble with the Enron-wasted-its-money thesis is that it defines the role of campaign finance too narrowly. Yes, if the Bush administration had acted to help Enron after it began to fall apart, that would have constituted a major scandal. It would also have been stupid. After all, the only thing the administration could have done would have been to organize some sort of loan, from either Congress, or the private sector, or the Federal Reserve. None of these would have been easy to arrange, nor would they have helped much anyway—once your firm has been exposed as essentially a crooked Ponzi scheme, borrowing money can't save you. To suggest that Bush's failure to act shows that Enron got nothing for its money is tantamount to concluding that your health insurance premiums did no good because the hospital failed to cure your cancer.

So what did Enron get for its money? Plenty. For one thing, it stood to reap huge windfalls from the Bush administration's energy plan (parts of which read as if they came from Ken Lay's keyboard) and from its stimulus bill (under which Enron would have received $254 million in corporate tax cuts). Granted, these Bush administration favors didn't contribute to Enron's downfall. But that's almost certainly because this oh-so-friendly administration has held office for only a year. To find the political kindnesses that enabled Enron's dubious business practices, you need to go back further.

For years Enron used its Washington clout to create what one executive called a "regulatory black hole"—a zone where Enron could operate almost completely free from federal oversight. To take perhaps the most egregious example, Senator Phil Gramm—who received nearly $100,000 from Enron, and whose wife served on Enron's board—fought off a 1997 attempt by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) to require companies to disclose their investment in "over-the-counter derivatives," an Enron specialty. And just before Bush took office, Gramm was instrumental in appending onto an unrelated appropriations bill a measure locking in the deregulation of derivatives—an item that congressional staff referred to as "the Enron Point." Enron used its investment in derivatives to cook its books, and it was the lack of federal oversight that allowed the company to escape detection for so long.

Even beyond the political favors specific to Enron, the company's stratospheric success and subsequent crash were facilitated by any number of federal policies that owed their existence to large contributions and aggressive lobbying by business interests. (Several of these were noted in the magazine's editorial last week, "The Real Enron Scandal.") In 1997, for example, the Senate neutered a plan to limit the portion of a worker's 401(k) plan that can be invested in a single company. If enacted, this would have protected the Enron employees who lost their life savings; but corporations—who prefer having workers heavily vested in company stock—lobbied to kill it. That same year, financial interests (including Enron) beat back another attempt, this one by the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, to require disclosure of a kind of derivative in which Enron had invested heavily; as a result, the company was able to keep its financial practices a mystery to outsiders.

In recent years, Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers also tried to close down tax shelters and offshore tax havens, which Enron used aggressively to conceal its

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finances. These efforts, too, were stymied by Congress, which was heavily lobbied by affected industries, including the accounting lobby. Accounting firms also pushed Congress to prevent another would-be reformer—Arthur Levitt, the previous chairman of the SEC—from banning them from auditing firms for which they do outside work. (Precisely this conflict-of-interest arrangement may have encouraged Arthur Andersen's lax audit of Enron, from which it received $27 million in nonaudit fees.) As part of this campaign, 52 members of Congress—most of whom served on the committees that oversee the SEC, and many of whom received generous donations from the accounting lobby—wrote letters to Levitt, some threatening to cut the SEC's budget if he didn't back down. All of these stymied reforms could have alleviated the Enron debacle or possibly prevented it altogether.

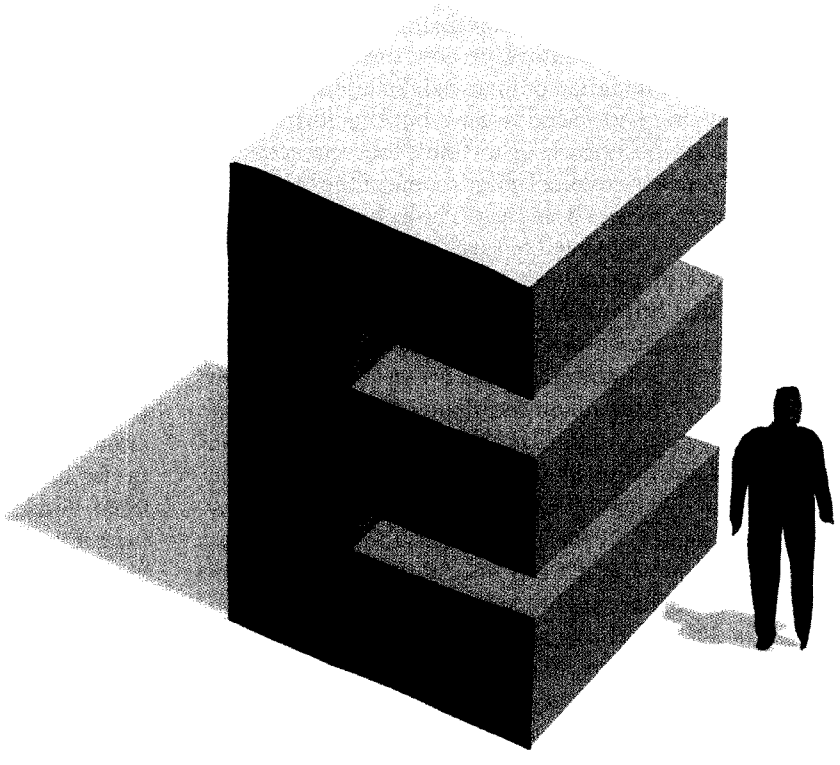
A DEFENDER OF unregulated campaign finance might argue that Enron and other business interests would have gotten these favors even if they hadn't donated millions. After all, conservative officeholders and the business lobbies that support them generally share a pro-business ideology, so maybe Congress would have done K Street's bidding in all these instances without having to be bribed. But this oft-heard argument falls apart upon examination. To begin with, many of the legislators who helped kill the reforms Enron hated were Democrats such as Charles Schumer and Joe Lieberman—who, while hardly left-wing ideologues, have no general predisposition toward narrow corporate interests. And even though Republicans tend toward free-market conservatism, that conservatism could just as easily take the form of, say, laissez-faire opposition to corporate welfare, rather than lapdog agreement with the K Street agenda.

Moreover, even if you believe that political donations merely bolster the prospects of politicians who already philosophically agree with the donor, that hardly exonerates the system. It simply means that unregulated campaign finance helps candidates whose views dovetail with moneyed interests to defeat candidates whose views don't. And if donors aren't helping their ideological sympathizers win, then why are they spending their money? Businesses, at least in the aggregate, tend to have a reasonable grasp of their immediate self-interest. They don't throw away hundreds of millions of dollars for nothing.

The next line of defense against campaign reform is fatalism: Money will always evade government restrictions, so why not just lift the rules and require disclosure? On page 17, Noam Scheiber makes a variant of this argument, maintaining that if K Street can't lure politicians with direct donations, it will simply lure them (and their staffers) with the promise of lucrative jobs, such as the one Enron gave Wendy Gramm.

It's true that limiting campaign donations won't achieve everything reform advocates desire. If Congress bans soft money, as the McCain-Feingold bill would do, special interests will spend unregulated sums to run their own advertising on behalf of favored candidates and causes. (That might still represent an improvement: Since candidates couldn't control the outside support, it would be less valuable to them, and hence they'd have less interest in pleasing the moneymen.) But ultimately the holes in McCain-Feingold don't undermine the case for campaign finance reform; they illustrate the need for reforms that provide candidates with public financing, either through direct subsidies or free TV time. If candidates have ample funding to run their campaigns, then they will need special-interest spending less. As for the prospect that K Street will just dangle more plum jobs before underpaid public servants, you could tighten up revolving-door laws and raise government salaries so it becomes more attractive to stay in public service, and harder to cash in on K Street. Besides, Washington lobbies have only so many jobs to offer. They can't hire everybody.

No laws can completely ferret out sleaze, of course. But the fatalistic notion that the power of special interests bears no relationship to the strength of campaign finance laws flies in the face of history. The political influence of business is not constant. As my colleague John B. Judis wrote in his recent book, *The Paradox of American Democracy*, it has waxed and waned over the course of the last century. Reforms intended to limit that power *can* work. Their effectiveness merely diminishes over time, until eventually the system grows so corrupt that the moment arrives for a wave of new reforms. It is just possible that Enron paves the way for another such moment. ■



BILL MAYER

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Enron and the irrelevance of campaign finance reform.

Business School

By Noam Scheiber

To date, the administration's line on what Enron means for campaign finance reform can be roughly summarized as follows: We don't need reform, in part because the perception of impropriety prevented officials from acting improperly. As *Wall Street Journal* columnist David Wessel put it earlier this month, "it was almost impossible for the Bush people to help Enron because they knew exactly what we'd be saying now if they did." By that logic, of course, the solution to corporate influence-buying is to spread around as much special-interest money as possible, since the more money a politician accepts, the more he fears the appearance of impropriety, and the less he actually does on a donor's behalf. Obviously things don't work that way. Large donors routinely win favors from the politicians they support. The reason these politicians don't worry about the appearance of impropriety is that no one's paying much attention.

But just because rich and powerful people often get what they want from government officials doesn't mean they'd stop getting what they want if you restricted their campaign contributions. They'd just find other ways to get it. The most obvious alternative is setting up front groups that run their own ad campaigns in support of particular candidates or issues—as the insurance industry did to help stymie Bill Clinton's 1994 health care reforms. But where Enron (and its apparent partner-in-crime, Arthur Andersen) is concerned, you don't even have to posit methods they could theoretically employ to get politicians to do their bidding; you just have to look at what they've been doing for years. Yes, one of those things has been donating to campaigns. But more important than the size of the contributions has been the lobbying effort behind them. And no one's talking about reforming that.

One of the ironies of the Enron scandal is that the political favors that most contributed to the energy trader's collapse were bought not by the company itself, but by the accounting industry. Over the years the major accounting firms have made an increasing portion of their profits from selling consulting services to the companies they audit. As is by now painfully clear, this arrangement gives auditors (say, Arthur Andersen) an enormous incentive to look the other way when their clients (say, Enron) misbehave. So, in 2000, then-Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) Chairman Arthur Levitt tried to force auditors out of the consulting business. But it wasn't long before key members of Congress, many of whom had received generous campaign contributions from the accounting industry, were calling Levitt with objections. As Levitt told *The New York Times* last week, "I spent nearly all of my time during those months responding to senatorial and congressional queries and visits." The initiative was dead by year's end.

Sounds like a perfect illustration of the need for campaign finance reform. Except that even if campaign finance were reformed, the accounting industry might well have achieved the same outcome. Consider this: In the mid-1970s the accounting industry came under similar pressure after signing off on the balance sheets of a string of failing clients. Indeed, when Montana Senator Lee Metcalf released a 1,760-page report in January 1977 calling for strict government oversight, it looked like the accounting industry's fate was sealed. And yet in a matter of months the industry had beaten back Metcalf's offensive and replaced it with the toothless, self-regulatory alternative that's proven so ineffectual 25 years later.

You'd be hard-pressed to argue that the industry won by exploiting a broken campaign finance system. After all, just a few years earlier, the nation had passed the most sweeping set of campaign finance reforms in American history. Soft money (as we know it) hadn't been invented yet. The practice known as "bundling," by which executives at large corporations pool their individual contributions to maximize their impact, was still a couple of years off. And while corporations had begun funneling money to politicians through political action committees (PACs), none of the major accounting firms had set up PACs of their own. All in all, the amount of money the industry could spend courting politicians was, by today's standards, paltry.

So how did the accounting industry defeat Metcalf's reforms? After the senator's report was released, industry executives and lobbyists flocked to Washington to meet with members of his Subcommittee on Reports, Accounting, and Management. The campaign grew so intense that Metcalf at one point called a hearing to fight the "misconceptions and misdirected criticism" being spread by the industry. But the lobbyists carried the day in the end. By June, even Metcalf and his most militant allies had come around to the industry's views on the matter.

Of course, many of the accounting firms and executives were probably political contributors, which would have made Congress susceptible to the lobbyists' suasion. But the fact that none of them could have been particularly large contributors by contemporary standards suggests it's not the absolute size of a political donation that determines its impact, but its relative size. As long as the limits on campaign contributions aren't so low that middle-class people can donate the maximum just as easily as wealthy people and corporations—and virtually none of today's reformers say they should be—most of a politician's campaign contributions will continue to come from wealthy people and corporations.

But that's only half the story. After all, there are lots of wealthy people and corporations, many of them with divergent interests. How's a politician supposed to know which one wants what? The key is that wealthy donors can spend *unlimited* amounts of money telling them. With the help of the lobbying industry that grew up in the '70s, corporations

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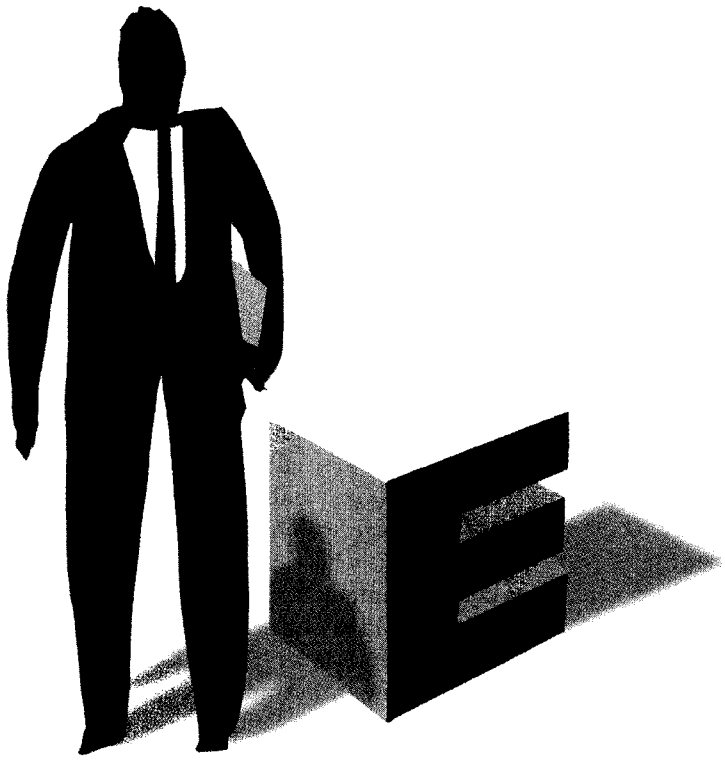
can make sure that individual members of Congress are constantly reminded of what they and their executives have donated in the past—or what they could donate (to them or their opponents) in the future. More importantly, they're reminded of what the donors would like to see in return.

Take the battle over the 1992 Energy Policy Act, which deregulated the electricity market, making it possible for companies like Enron to enter the electricity trade by forcing local utility generators to open their wires. On one side were would-be trading companies like Enron, which stood to profit from deregulation, and utilities, which stood to gain from lower wholesale electricity prices. On the other were the traditional electricity generators, which feared that competition in the sale of electricity would lower their profits. Both sides spent heavily—for and against the legislation. Yet the final vote for deregulation was 381-37 in the House and 94-4 in the Senate. Why so lopsided? According to a *Washington Post* story at the time, it was because of "work by lobbyists, academics, true-believer congressional staff members, think-tank scholars, policy specialists and a handful of aggressive industry leaders." In other words, a massive lobbying campaign.

Needless to say, over the past decade Enron ran one of the most sophisticated—and well-funded—lobbying operations in Washington. In 2000, the same year the accounting industry was battling Levitt, Enron was pushing Congress to permanently exempt energy derivatives—the financial instruments it relied upon in its energy-trading business—from regulatory oversight. There's been much attention paid to the fact that Enron spent $2.4 million on campaign contributions in the 2000 election cycle. What's been less noted is that, according to the *Post*, the energy giant also spent more than $2 million that year on high-profile lobbyists such as former Montana Governor (and current Republican National Committee chairman) Marc Racicot, and former aides to House Majority Leader Dick Armey and House Majority Whip Tom DeLay. Of a DeLay aide turned lobbyist named Ed Buckham, a former colleague told the *Times*, "They certainly through Ed Buckham got more attention than people who didn't have Ed Buckham." The problem is that you pretty much have to be rich to afford Ed Buckham. And McCain-Feingold wouldn't restrict his efforts one bit.

BUT EVEN IF you managed to both restrict campaign contributions and limit the power of lobbyists to influence legislation, you probably wouldn't keep corporations from using their money to get the outcomes they want. That's because every member of Congress, congressional aide, and federal regulator knows they can one day make several times their current salary in the private sector—as long as they don't alienate too many prospective employers while in office. Enron seems to have grasped this logic as well as anyone. In 1993, a good seven years before Congress stepped in to make the exemption law, the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) voted to exempt energy derivatives from oversight on the recommendation of CFTC Chairman Wendy Gramm. Five weeks after leaving the CFTC later that same year, Gramm joined Enron's board—a relationship that, according to Public Citizen, would net her between $915,000 and $1.85 million over the next eight years. There's little reason to believe that Gramm—the wife of staunchly pro-Enron Senator Phil Gramm and a free-market ideologue herself—made her decision in the hopes of landing a cushy gig with the energy giant. But there's every reason to believe that if she'd made a different decision she wouldn't have been offered the gig in the first place. Which is to say, even if it doesn't form the explicit basis for any particular decision, that kind of knowledge is bound to have some impact on how public servants view their dealings with powerful private interests.

MOREOVER, THE REVOLVING door swings both ways. It's not just what a big company such as Enron might do for you in the future, but what they may already have done for you in the past. Perhaps the sleaziest interaction disclosed thus far between Enron and the Bush administration took place during last year's presidential transition. At the time, the company faced a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission chairman, Curtis Hebert Jr., whose go-slow approach to electricity deregulation clashed with Enron's ambitious plans. So, to ease the stalemate, Enron Chairman Ken Lay called Hebert and suggested his tenure might be extended were he to undergo a sudden change of heart. Hebert declined and was promptly replaced



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by a more sympathetic regulator.

Some would conclude that Enron wielded so much influence over the White House personnel process because of all the money it had contributed to George W. Bush's political aspirations over the years. But it's just as plausible that Enron had so much influence because it had recently employed so many of the people involved in making White House personnel decisions. Economic adviser Lawrence Lindsey, Trade Representative Robert Zoellick, Commerce Department general counsel Theodore Kassinger, and Maritime Administrator William Schubert have all been employed as Enron consultants in recent years. The *Post* recently reported that an Enron employee named Cynthia Sandherr worked on the Commerce Department transition team. With friends like those on the inside, it's hardly surprising that Enron usually got its way on administration appointments.

John McCain, for one, seems well aware of the role of lobbyists in corrupting the political system. On the campaign trail in 2000 the Arizona senator was fond of promising to "break the iron triangle of big money, lobbyists and legislation and take the government out of the hands of the special interests." But the legislation that bears his name doesn't do anything about lobbyists. Which is why it probably wouldn't have kept Enron from wielding its dastardly influence in Washington over the past few years, and why it won't stop Enron's would-be imitators from doing the same long after today's scandal is a distant memory. ■

Alabama's new schoolhouse door.

Sorority Row

By JASON ZENGERLE

TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA

ON THE FIRST day of sorority rush last September, Melody Twilley woke up and could not find her lavender nail polish. This constituted a bit of an emergency. The night before, Twilley, an 18-year-old student at the University of Alabama, had borrowed a blue and purple slip dress with spaghetti straps from one of her roommates; the lavender nail polish, in her opinion, was essential to completing the outfit. She tore her room apart, emptying drawers and scattering papers, and after half an hour found the polish. But then, when Twilley went to fetch the dress out of the closet, it wasn't there. Another frantic search ensued until Twilley discovered the dress, laid out on a chair, where she had placed it the night before for easy detection. It was that kind of morning.

By noon, however, Twilley was put together and standing in front of the Delta Zeta house, a neoclassical mansion on sorority row. And at twelve o'clock sharp, the doors opened and the young women gathered in the foyer burst into song: "Delta Zeta is the best! Pledge Delta Zeta!" Twilley was ushered in and handed a glass of ice water. For 15 minutes she made small talk with the women who would determine whether she was Delta Zeta material. Then it was on to Zeta Tau Alpha for another round of singing and small talk. Then Alpha Delta Pi, and then Chi Omega. By eight that evening, Twilley had visited 15 sorority houses and had the same conversation 15 times. "They ask where you're from, you ask where they're from. They ask what you're majoring in, you ask what they're majoring in," Twilley recalled. "That's about all you can really do in fifteen minutes." Save for some small touches—Zeta Tau Alpha put strawberries in their ice water; Phi Mu gave the rushees a house tour—there was little to differentiate one sorority from the next. "All of them seemed pretty much the same," Twilley said.

There was also little to differentiate Twilley from the 730 other University of Alabama women going through rush last fall. A tall, pretty girl with a fondness for shopping malls and the Jeep Grand Cherokee her father bought for her, Twilley blended right in to the roiling mix of social ambition and social privilege. But Twilley did differ in two ways. For one thing, unlike the vast majority of rushees, who are admitted into sororities as freshmen, this wasn't Twilley's first time through. She had tried—and failed—to join a sorority the year before. Which may have had something to do with the other thing that set Melody Twilley apart: She is black.

The University of Alabama was founded in 1831, but it did not enroll its first black student until 125 years later; she lasted three days before being expelled "for her own safety." In 1963 the university integrated for good, with then-Governor George Wallace making his famous "stand in the schoolhouse door" in defiance of federal marshals escorting two black students to register for classes. Since then, the university has made some impressive strides—today blacks constitute 14.5 percent of the undergraduate student body, making the university one of the most integrated state schools in the South—but social integration has been more elusive. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the university's Greek system, which is almost completely divided by race. A few of the school's eight historically black fraternities and sororities have had a handful of white members over the years, but the 37 traditionally white fraternities and sororities have not been as welcoming. Indeed, when Melody Twilley stood in front of the Delta Zeta house last September, it was believed that no white fraternity or soror-

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ity at the University of Alabama had ever offered membership to a black student. More remarkably, aside from a handful of faculty and administrators, no one at the school seemed to care—least of all its black students. And the segregated Greek system is not just a campus issue. That's because in insular Alabama, where the friendships and connections that matter most in life are often made during the four years you spend in Tuscaloosa, if you can't enter the university's white Greek system, you're unlikely to enter the state's political and economic elite.

SIXTY YEARS AGO the great Southern social critic W. J. Cash wrote that at the University of Alabama "the academic department [has] the status of an appanage [i.e., adjunct] of fraternity row and a hired football team." Today the faculty has improved, and the football team has fallen on hard times, but the fraternities—and now the sororities—still rule the school. Although only about 20 percent of the student body belong to white fraternities and sororities, the white Greeks control the student government association (SGA)—and a $155,000 budget—through something called "the Machine," a secret organization established in 1888. Made up of representatives from about 25 of the white Greek organizations, the Machine selects a slate of student-government candidates each year. It then organizes an impressive get-out-the-vote effort on fraternity and sorority row. "They throw you in vans, give you beer, and you go vote for the [Machine] slate," recalls one former Machine-affiliated fraternity member. "You get fined if you don't go vote. The social pressure is also pretty intense." This lockstep voting by the white Greeks has ensured that since the university's student government was created in 1915, only seven non-Machine candidates have been elected SGA president. "The Machine is like [Yale's] Skull and Bones," says one Alabama professor, "except that the Machine actually has real power."

That power is not confined to the university campus. When the Machine's members leave Tuscaloosa, they typically go on to Birmingham, Huntsville, Mobile, and Montgomery, and join Machine alums in Alabama's political and business elite. Machine members work in Alabama's most prestigious law firms and businesses; they have been state legislators, state party chairmen, congressmen, presidents of the state bar, members of the Public Service Commission, and federal judges. For most of the 1940s, '50s, and '60s, both of Alabama's U.S. Senators, Lister Hill and John Sparkman, were Machine alums. Alabama's current governor, Don Siegelman, was the Machine-backed SGA president in 1968; Senator Richard Shelby is also said to have been a member of the Machine (although his office has denied this). As one former member of a Machine-affiliated sorority explained to the student newspaper *The Crimson White*, "The goal is to run campus politics, but the real reason they want to run campus politics is so they themselves can run politics in Alabama."

The first real challenge to Machine power came in the '60s. "[A]fter desegregation," says E. Culpepper Clark, dean of the university's college of communications and author of *The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama*, "the Greeks increasingly became an aberration, no longer reflecting what the university was and is." To some administrators, the Machine and its all-white membership was too much of a reminder of the way things used to be. And they took steps to lessen its impact. For years they tried to coax the white Greeks to admit blacks. In 1993 the administration actually suspended the SGA for three years—after a non-Machine candidate claimed she was attacked by Machine supporters—in the hopes of breaking the Machine's hold.

But the Machine stood strong. Since the SGA was reinstated in 1996, Machine candidates have not lost one presidential election. White Greeks also refused to budge on integration. And that intransigence was sometimes quite ugly. In 1986, when the black sorority Alpha Kappa Alpha was planning to move to the previously all-white sorority row, two white students burned a cross on the front lawn of the new house. In the early '90s a black homecoming queen was booed by white fraternity members at her coronation. And three years ago, when a black student mounted a serious but unsuccessful run for SGA president, he received threats on his answering machine. "Nigger," said one, "we're going to hang you from a tree."

IT WAS AGAINST this backdrop that Melody Twilley tried to join a white sorority. She was a most unlikely revolutionary. The daughter of upper-middle-class parents—her mother is a librarian; her father is the largest black landowner in the state—Twilley grew up in Alabama's black belt. At 15 she was plucked out of her local high school and sent to the Alabama School of Mathematics and Science, a prestigious public boarding school in Mobile. There she was one of only a few black students, but her minority status never occurred to her. "Race isn't really an issue down there," she says. When Twilley arrived in Tuscaloosa in August 2000, it seemed perfectly logical to her that she would join a sorority. After all, her friends from Math and Science—who were white—were joining them. She had the money. (When I once asked Twilley whether sororities offered need-based assistance to students who couldn't afford to pay the hefty dues, she said that they didn't. "If you have a need," she explained, "you probably won't get in.") She even considered herself a Republican. "I just always thought being in a sorority was part of the college experience," she says.

On her first day of rush as a freshman, Twilley visited 15 sororities and loved every one. "I thought it was the greatest," she recalls. "I met all these girls, and they were so cute and they were so sweet and they were doing their little door songs, beating on their windows and everything. I thought it was adorable." When invitations went out for the second round, Twilley was invited back to seven. "It kind of surprised me," Twilley says. "I thought they liked me a little more than that." But she wasn't concerned: "I went to those seven houses, and I just had a blast, and we made little arts and crafts, and I painted flower pots—that was cool." When it came time for the third round, however, Twilley didn't receive any invitations. "The [rush official] said, 'Melody, I'm sorry, but I have to tell you that you've been dropped.'

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And I was like, 'Really, are you serious? Why?' And she was like, 'I don't know, I'm really sorry. I hope you didn't have a bad rush experience, I hope you had fun anyway.' And I was like, 'Yeah, it was cool. I thought I was going to get into a sorority. But that's OK.' "

Although Twilley was one of only a handful of women not to get a bid that year, she didn't think much of her rejection at first. "I guess it occurred to me a couple of weeks later that I hadn't seen many black people wandering around [sorority row]," Twilley says, "[but] I wasn't that upset.... It wasn't like I wanted to drop out of school and move to San Francisco and play a guitar on the street or something." It wasn't until March, when Twilley attended a demonstration at the student union—protesting the Machine's all-white makeup and its control of the SGA—that she went public with her story, telling it to those assembled. Her speech caught the attention of Pat Hermann, an English professor who has been fighting to end the segregated Greek system for more than 15 years. In Twilley he saw the perfect symbol for his cause. "She's bright, she's attractive, she's a member of the upper class," Hermann says. In other words, someone whose exclusion could only be explained by race.

A scholar of medieval literature, Hermann arrived in Alabama in 1974 and, over time, has become something of an anthropologist of the school's Greek system. He also has become a bit of a zealot. Taking me around Tuscaloosa one day in his beat-up Honda Accord, he held forth on the Greeks. "The location of the houses, the nature of the houses, these things matter," he explained, as we drove down University Boulevard, past the stately mansions that make up Old Fraternity Row. Old Row, Hermann said, was where the most powerful—white—fraternities had their houses. New Fraternity Row, on a side street, was largely for the less powerful white houses and the black ones. "Anyone who thinks the Greek system is silly or a foolish thing that can be satirized is seriously underestimating the success of a racist structure that allows not particularly bright young men and young women access to worthy mates," he said.

With Hermann leading the charge, Twilley became a cause célèbre among some faculty and administrators, and the movement to end the segregated Greek system—a movement that had more or less dwindled down to only Hermann—got a shot in the arm. Some began pushing for a "unified rush" instead of the current system, under which white Greeks hold their rush in the fall and black Greeks

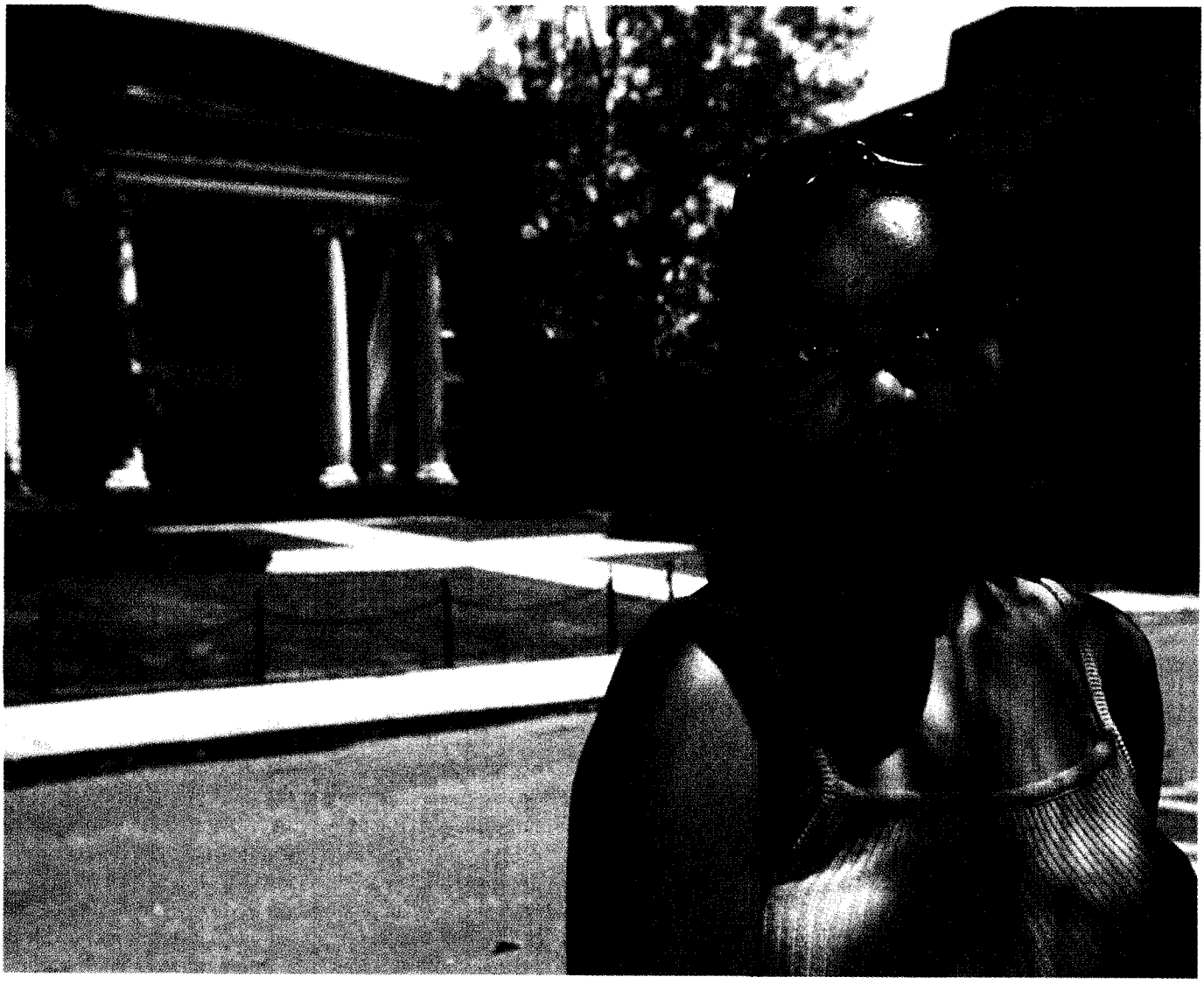

PHOTO BY MICHAEL A. SCHWARZ

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hold theirs in the spring. Others argued that the white Greeks should be forced to accept black students or forfeit the $100-per-year leases on their university-owned houses, which sit on some of the choicest real estate in Tuscaloosa. In August the faculty senate unanimously passed a resolution calling on the white Greeks to desegregate or risk penalties. And a few weeks later, when rush began and Melody Twilley tried for the second time to join a sorority, she brought along written recommendations from Greek alumni that faculty and administrators had solicited for her. "I've fallen in love with her," Kathleen Cramer, the university's associate vice president for student affairs, told me last September. "I think she's incredibly brave to do it twice. I'm so hopeful it'll work this time."

BUT AS POPULAR as it is with some faculty, desegregation has not struck a chord with many black students. Indeed, just as Twilley was about to rush again last September, the president of the university's NAACP chapter, Dave Washington Jr., called a press conference to denounce efforts to desegregate the system. "We feel the faculty senate should tend to more important racial concerns on campus than the Greek system," Washington said. Washington's views were admittedly controversial and were criticized by other black students. But even those black students who supported Twilley's attempt to join a white sorority had no desire to follow in her footsteps. As one black student—a self-described "Melody Twilley fan"—said, "Why would anyone ever want to join one of those?"

The main reason black students have such little interest in joining white fraternities and sororities, of course, is that they have fraternities and sororities of their own. In the early '70s black University of Alabama undergraduates began establishing chapters of the Greek organizations commonly found at historically black colleges and universities. And the black fraternities and sororities do have unique qualities that differentiate them—sometimes for the better—from the white ones. The black Greeks tend to tap new members when they're sophomores, and even have some graduate and professional students as members; they often require members to perform community service and maintain certain GPAs. And their parties are focused more on step-dancing shows than on kegs.

But Alabama's black Greek organizations also differ from the white Greeks in another way. Once upon a time, the black Greeks aimed at producing elites. Indeed, at the historically black colleges and universities that thrived before desegregation, fraternities and sororities—particularly a group of them called the "Divine Nine"—were home to each school's best and brightest. Black Greek organizations played a vital role in nurturing members of a new black professional class. But with desegregation, the role of the black Greeks began to change. First, many top-flight black students began shunning black schools like Howard and Morehouse—and their Greek systems—in favor of non-black schools that had once been off-limits. And at those schools, the black fraternities and sororities that did spring up were less about elite creation than about a social safety net. They were places where black students negotiating predominately white campuses could go to feel comfortable.

This is certainly the case at Alabama. "People often ... say that the whites have theirs and we have ours. But I think it's something quite different," says Amilcar Shabazz, director of Alabama's African-American studies program. Black fraternities and sororities at Alabama "allow for some psychic social release," he says. "[Black students] go to the black Greek system and they're able to find some social outlets, some humor, some people to bond with.... [But] when it comes to the post-college network, there's no parallel to what the white Greeks here have."

ONE AFTERNOON I went to the Kappa Alpha Psi house to visit Robert Turner. A handsome 19-year-old sophomore with a shaved head and a thin moustache, Turner had been one of Twilley's most outspoken supporters and was considered a leader by a number of his fellow black students. It was a view of himself that he shared: "You're probably going to hear a lot more about me in the future," he'd told me in our first conversation over the phone. Turner met me at the door of his fraternity house, a slightly shabby brick building at the far end of New Row, and led me upstairs to his room. Sitting underneath a poster of Kobe Bryant, he talked about why he came to the University of Alabama and why he was a Kappa.

Turner had gone to what he called a "99.8 percent black" high school with an all-black faculty in Tuskeegee. When it came time to choose a college, his initial inclination was to go to Morehouse. But Turner decided that wouldn't help him achieve his larger ambitions. "You have to interact with white people," he explained. "That's one of the reasons I wanted to come to Alabama. It teaches you how to interact and cooperate with them on a professional level. And that's what you need for the real world." A school like Alabama, he said, "breeds leaders of the state, like governors and senators." But once Turner got to Tuscaloosa, he found that his desire to be around white people had its limits. The thought of trying to join a white fraternity, he said, never crossed his mind. "I don't feel like I can relate to them that much," he explained. "The stuff I went through in life, I don't think they've ever gone through." Kappa Alpha Psi, on the other hand, seemed like home. "It was a no-brainer," Turner said of his decision to join a black fraternity. "It was where I felt comfortable, where I was able to relate."

After a while, I asked Turner whether he worried that by being in a black fraternity rather than a Machine-driven white one, he was jeopardizing his ambitions—that he was not making the connections and friendships critical to an aspiring Alabama politician like himself. It was clear from his expression that the thought had not occurred to him before. He paused, staring at the floor and playing with the Kappa Alpha Psi ring on his finger. Then, he raised his head and looked me in the eye. "I feel like I have the best connection in the world," he said. "That's with Jesus Christ."

Bryan Oliver's connections are more earthly. A member of Kappa Alpha—one of Alabama's oldest and most powerful fraternities—Oliver hopes to go into finance when he gradu-

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ates this spring. And he's counting on getting some help. "There are old KA's who work in Tuscaloosa, Birmingham, Mobile, everywhere," he says. "If you need a job, talk to one of your fraternity brothers. Maybe his dad can help you out."

With thin brown hair and a soft round face, Oliver doesn't have Turner's charisma. But that doesn't seem to matter. Until this month he was president of the Interfraternity Council (IFC), the traditionally white fraternities' governing body. Some said Oliver was also president of the Machine, a rumor he laughingly dismissed. "It might exist on some level or another," he said, "but I've never been in contact with anybody." As IFC president, it was Oliver's job to present the white Greeks' position on segregation. He took me on a tour of the Kappa Alpha house—an antebellum-style mansion on Old Row filled with portraits of Confederate veterans—and tried to explain why the white Greeks had no black members. "The applicant pool is very small," he said in a thick Southern accent that reflected his Montgomery upbringing. "There are very few African American students who are willing to, or who want to, participate in Pan-Hellenic and IFC rush." I asked him why he thought that was. "I don't know," he said, a pained expression on his face, "maybe we don't do a very good job of reaching out to enough people.... We know we've got to do something about segregation."

But when I asked Oliver about some of the proposed reforms, he stiffened. Unified rush wasn't financially feasible, he said, and terminating leases would violate contractual agreements. He hinted at the possibility of lawsuits by the white Greeks. "I don't think sanctions are the way to go," Oliver insisted. "It's one of those things where if your mom and dad tell you not to play in the street, what's the first thing you're going to do? You're going to run out in the street." As for when the white Greeks might integrate of their own accord, Oliver didn't know. "There's really no timetable," he said. "I hope in the next couple years."

Pat Hermann has been hearing that for a long time. "They always say, 'Not on my watch,'" he fumes. "The only thing they care about is that it doesn't happen this year. It's a brilliant, self-perpetuating system." Hermann continues to push, but carefully. "I don't present myself as a proponent for integration," he says. "I only present myself as an anti-segregationist, as someone who's fighting a struggle against taxpayer-supported segregation.... I've never spoken out in favor of integration in the Greek system." That, apparently, would be far too radical for the University of Alabama.

On the last day of sorority rush 2001, hundreds of women in sundresses and sandals lined up outside Alabama's massive football stadium. It was bid day, also known as "squeal day"—the fifth and final stage of rush when sororities announce their new members—and the women were a sea of makeup, perfume, and nervous energy. The sorority houses nearby were festooned with banners: "ALPHA CHI OMEGA, ONLY THE BEST WILL DO"; "TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE, DELTA DELTA DELTA"; "ALPHA OMICRON PI, FROM ONE GENERATION TO ANOTHER, WELCOME NEW MEMBERS." And a large crowd, filled with friends and family bearing cameras and bouquets, had gathered. At three o'clock the rushees, some of them pausing to hug their parents one last time, filed into the stadium to learn their fates.

Melody Twilley was not among them. After the first day of rush, nine sororities had invited her back. But only one of those nine, Alpha Delta Pi, had asked her to return for the third day. Still, Twilley had been hopeful. At the third day's event, an Alpha Delta Pi sister finally brought up the elephant in the room. "Tracy took me aside and she said that she was sure a lot of people were avoiding the big issue with me, and that they were treating me like any other rushee," Twilley recalled. "Which is great and everything, but she actually wanted to talk candidly about it, which I really appreciated.... She said she had heard rumors that I was trying to prove a point with the whole thing. I cleared that up for her really fast, because nobody wants to go through rush just to prove a point and then drop out. That is so dumb." Twilley thought the conversation had reassured Alpha Delta Pi. But the next morning, at 7:21, her phone rang and she got the bad news: Alpha Delta Pi hadn't invited her back for the fourth and penultimate round of rush. "I cried for about four hours," Twilley said. "And then I got dressed and went shopping at University Mall. I got one hundred thirty dollars worth of makeup." The trip lifted her spirits, and her mother encouraged her to try again next year, "just to let them know that you won't just lay down and die about it, just to keep coming back," Twilley said. But, she added, "I don't think I'm going to do that."

As it turned out, Twilley would not have been the first black student to join a traditionally white Greek organization. In the middle of rush, a sophomore named Christina Houston—whose mother is white and whose father is black—had come forward to reveal that she had joined Gamma Phi Beta the previous year. But Houston, who looks like a white woman with a dark tan, did not mention her parents' races when she rushed, and the sorority had apparently been unaware of her racial heritage when it admitted her. Last November a small, year-old Christian fraternity that had been all white, Lamda Sigma Phi, added a black student, Calvin Johnson, to its ranks. Lamda Sigma Phi has applied for membership to the IFC; if it is admitted next January, as expected, then the traditionally white fraternities will have integrated as well. But these are less real advances than flukes. Twilley was the challenge to the system, and she was rejected.

As the young women filed into the stadium, they were handed envelopes and led to a section of bleachers. Once they were all there, a dean stood in front of them and said the magic words: "Open them up!" With that, the squeals began. The women jumped up and down, clutching the envelopes to their chests, and they began to run—down the bleachers, out of the stadium, and on to sorority row. They ran past their parents and friends and toward their new houses, where their new sisters were waiting for them. As they went, they dropped sunglasses and cell phones and purses. They yelled and screamed. Some were crying. It was, more than one of them would later say, the happiest day of their lives. ■

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

The Three Mysteries

"THE SOUNDTRACK invented silence," said Robert Bresson, and some of the best directors in history, including himself, have fixed silence on film. For them, silence is both aural and visual, not merely the absence of talk but the presentation of persons who fill our imaginations with what they are not saying. Such a director is Tsai Ming-liang, the Taiwanese artist already distinguished by qualities of intense concern and cool scrutiny that are encased in quiet. His latest work, **What Time Is It There?** (Arena), again dwells in quiet.

Tsai was born in Malaysia in 1957 and earned a degree in drama and film from the University of Taiwan. For a time he worked in Taiwanese theater and television, and in 1992 he made his first feature film, which he followed with four more. I have seen only *The River* (1996), but with that and with some reading about him, it becomes clear that his latest work is deeply rooted.

As the title foretells, this film is concerned with time and space and the relation between them. Tsai's courage in addressing these concepts, all of them often enwrapped in silence, is matched by the simplicity, the audacious respect, of his address. The story of this film, in the screenplay written by the director and Yang Pi-ying, is not in itself a drama or a sequence of character explorations: it is not much more than a sequence of events in which the three concepts that absorb Tsai can unfold. If the contrast between the film's huge subjects and its structural spareness suggests the existential absurd, that seems to be what Tsai is seeking.

Mimicking his disregard for convention, I begin with the last scene of the film. It is set in Paris. One morning a young Taiwanese woman, Shiang-chyi, is sitting silently by a lake in a park, apparently collecting her thoughts. A suitcase floats by on the lake. The camera leaves Shiang and follows the suitcase. An elderly man farther down the edge of the lake, who has no connection to her, hooks the suitcase with his umbrella and brings it ashore. He leaves it there and walks away. The film ends. The fact that the young woman has just come from an unexpected one-night (lesbian) encounter; the fact that a few minutes earlier we saw a hooker in far-off Taipei rob a young man of his suitcase, a young man whom Shiang once met—these facts resonate in this last scene, both as Shiang's effort to understand herself and as the director's soft mockery of neat plot parallels. It is a scene that the master minimalist Ozu might have relished.

Comparable sequences form the body of the film. In the opening scene, a middle-aged man smokes a cigarette in his home, then sits down to a meal. We assume that he is a character whom we are to follow, but we never see him again. We soon learn that he has died, because his widow is frantically trying to get his spirit to revisit her. These two are the parents of the young man who is later robbed by the hooker. His name is Hsiao Kang, and the film's only noisy scenes are those between him and his mother as he tries to stop her silly efforts to invite her dead husband's return.

Hsaio is a watch peddler in the Taipei streets. Shiang is a young woman on her way to Paris for a holiday. En route to the airport she tries to buy a watch from him, the one he is wearing. He declines. Ultimately she convinces him and, with the watch, goes off on her trip. This is the only time they meet, and she never refers to him again. He becomes obsessed with re-setting every watch and clock he sees to Paris time, but there is no sense of lorn love in him, just a heightened awareness of all the world he does not know. The lightness of the young couple's encounter, the fact that it does not lead to any mystical union, is essential to Tsai's design. He wants to show that an immersion in his three elements does not depend on drama or even on narrative. We simply follow the lives of two people who met for a moment and are now thousands of miles apart.

If we have any reservations about the film's gravity or the director's courage in disregarding almost everything that holds most pictures together, they are calmed by the very look of this film. (Benoit Delhomme is the empathic cinematographer.) Most of the interiors are in confined space, compositions full of interest and ease, with spare sidelighting as part of the composition. A place is revealed, and that place itself is sometimes the sum of everything that happens in the scene. The camera almost never moves. There is never a panning shot. (Bresson said that "one should not use the camera as if it were a broom.")

In a scene near the end, Shiang is standing in a Paris cemetery looking at a reclining sculpted figure on a grave. Nothing happens—except what we know is happening within her, some contemplation of who and why she is. In her next scene she sits on a bench outside the cemetery. An older man is on the other end of the bench, and sensing her loneliness, he strikes up a terse yet friendly conversation with her—in English. Then he scribbles on a piece of paper and hands it to her. It is his telephone number. End of scene. This nameless man is played by Jean-Pierre Léaud, who, when he was young, was Antoine Doinel in five Truffaut films. The reminder of Truffaut is apt, because Tsai's very first scene with the character who is never seen again is reminiscent of Truffaut. But those who do not know Léaud or Truffaut are not bypassed: for anyone, the bench scene is odd and true.

As is sometimes the case, this description of *What Time Is It There?* is hazardous, because it may sound as if samples were being offered of a linear, cumulative story. But this picture consists only of moments in which things happen, visible or invisible. Two lives brush briefly, then continue on their own. Conventional design is not the point: the currents of existence take over. We are drenched in the mere passage of time—the film's one hundred sixteen minutes are part of what it is about. (The "there" in the title, it seems worth noting, might also be in the widow's mind about her husband: she and he are more certainly separated than her son and the young woman.) We are teased with the thought of what might possibly have happened with this young pair. (Indeed, the son's anger at his mother's attempts to reach her dead husband may be a refraction of his own separation from the young woman.) And throughout the film silence recurs, paradoxically like the refrain of a ballad.

Tsai is well-served by his principal actors, Lu Yi-ching as the distraught widow, Lee Kang-sheng as her shadowed son, Chen Shiang-chyi as the young woman who seems to feed on every moment of her life. All of them have worked with Tsai before and have in some measure

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become his instruments and collaborators, as Bergman's actors did.

As with some Bergman films and with numerous artworks in the last two centuries, Tsai's film does not strain to invite us in. It declares itself early as eccentric, luring us only with its fine formalities. Neither does it ultimately satisfy in the way that concentric films, including many masterworks, nourish us. It promises the unusual, and keeps its promise: we move and wonder like explorers in a large echoing cavern where Tsai's three elements abide. ■

Jed Perl on Art
Making Taste

I.

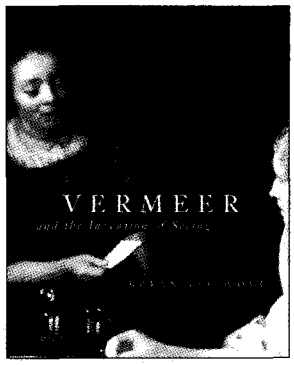
TASTEMAKERS HAVE BEEN, at least for the past two hundred years, among the engineers of the arts. The great ones—the visionary collectors and patrons and institution-builders—were oxygenators of the new. They latched onto the latest artistic developments; they celebrated striking or arcane material; they suggested unexpected ways of understanding the past. And they made space for their discoveries, and over time that space became a public space. A good deal of shouting and grandstanding and egotism may have been involved. Sometimes these men and women may have felt, as they cut a figure in the arts, that they were mostly satisfying their own appetites or amusing their friends or just adding to the general hullabaloo. In the end, though, the tastemaker is even more transparent than the artist in Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent," for to the extent that tastemakers succeed, their avidities become what the culture takes for granted—a way that anybody with a keen interest in the arts will see the world.

To celebrate the lives of tastemakers is natural; it is a way of celebrating the arts. There can also be something maddening about the books and the exhibitions that honor their achievements, for the backward glance that catches the champagne fizz of cultural triumphs past can leave us feeling that nobody really took any of this seriously, while the studies that delve into the minutiae of shifting tastes can miss the thunderclap of the new. No wonder there is a now-you-see-it-now-you-don't quality to many studies devoted to tastemakers. These books can seem too esoteric or too broad; and sometimes they fail in both directions simultaneously. But take a number of studies together—Eugene R. Gaddis's **Magician of the Modern: Chick Austin and the Transformation of the Arts in America** (Knopf); Sybil Gordon Kantor's **Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and the Intellectual Origins of the Museum of Modern Art** (MIT); Anton Gill's forthcoming **Art Lover: A Biography of Peggy Guggenheim** (HarperCollins); and the catalogue of an exhibition called **William Beckford, 1760–1844: An Eye for the Magnificent** (Yale)—and what comes into focus is a sort of stereoscopic picture of men and women with visionary sensibilities operating at the point where high culture and high society intersect.

Of the four figures covered by these studies, William Beckford, who died in 1844 at the age of eighty-three, is the only one who cannot be said to have been public-spirited in the sense of founding or guiding an institution. Yet Fonthill Abbey, the Gothic Revival home with a grand centralized tower that Beckford commissioned from the architect James Wyatt, had an immensely public impact, even as it was going up in the last years of the eighteenth century. When Beckford decided to sell Fonthill Abbey in 1822, the house was discussed almost daily in the press and visited by crowds of people. The Abbey was eulogized by Byron after the tower collapsed in 1825, and its fame (according to Beckford's most recent biographer, Timothy Mowl) set the stage a decade later for the decision to build the Houses of Parliament in the Gothic style.

Beckford can thus be counted an early case of an aesthete whose taste had a catalytic power. Indeed, Lincoln Kirstein once wrote that there was something Beckfordish about Chick Austin, who was the director of the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut between 1927

SEEING & AND NOT SEEING ART



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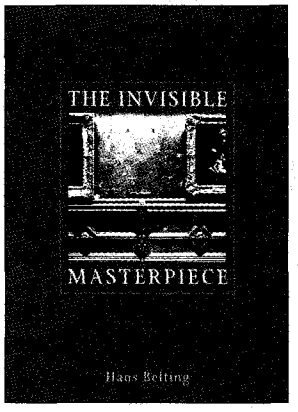

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and 1945, transforming a rather dowdy museum into a linchpin of the arts in America, with shows of Surrealism and Picasso, purchases of Balthus and Mondrian, a new wing in the International Style, and the first production of the Virgil Thomson–Gertrude Stein *Four Saints in Three Acts*.

Experimental tastes in the arts came to have an ever-increasing public presence during the century and a half that separated Beckford's early success as the author of the Gothic novel *Vathek* from the now-legendary efforts to spread the word about modern art made by Chick Austin, Alfred Barr, and Peggy Guggenheim. These moderns were born within a few years of each other: Guggenheim in 1898, Austin (whose full name was Arthur Everett Austin Jr.) in 1900, and Barr in 1902; Austin died in 1957, Guggenheim in 1979, and Barr in 1981. You might say that each of them had the heart of a quivering aesthete encased in the body of a wily politician. Both Austin and Barr were intent on shaping museums that would shift the public's perceptions. They were both to a very significant degree emboldened by their studies at Harvard, where Paul J. Sachs, after a career at Goldman Sachs, his family firm, had become a key figure in the development of the Fogg Art Museum and the mastermind behind a course on how to operate a museum that is described in fine detail in Kantor's study of Barr.

As for Peggy Guggenheim, her determination to give New York's undersupported avant-garde an uptown presence in the 1940s precipitated a defining moment in the history of art in America. And she gratefully acknowledged the influence of Barr in the catalogue that she published for the opening of her Art of This Century Gallery on West 57th Street in 1942. Later on, Barr, introducing one of the editions of Guggenheim's memoirs, saluted her "courage and vision, generosity and humility, money and time, [and] strong sense of historical significance, as well as of aesthetic quality." (Peggy Guggenheim was the second member of her family to create an avant-garde exhibition space in New York; her uncle Solomon R. Guggenheim's museum, then called the Museum of Non-Objective Painting, opened in 1939.)

Guggenheim, Barr, and Austin were extremists in matters of taste. They were for the strangest, the most surprising, the most satisfying, the best; for what was unique. They were independent spirits, but they did not operate alone. Tastemakers never do. Austin and Barr led institutional teams; Barr was famous for saying, time and again, that the credit for this or that exhibition or museum program should not go to him. He seems to have spread the blame around, too: when Peggy Guggenheim complained to Barr that Pollock was not included in an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, he explained that the decision had been made by Dorothy Miller, a close associate who organized most of the museum's shows of contemporary American art in the 1940s and 1950s. Guggenheim herself was so generous in her memoirs about acknowledging the advice of others—Duchamp, Mondrian, Max Ernst (to whom she was married for a time)—that it is sometimes forgotten that she had an instinct for whom to consult and where to put her funds that may be counted a sort of genius. As for Beckford, despite his seigneurial manners, he spent his life in a dizzying involvement with dealers, with architects, and with the craftsmen who helped him realize designs for precious objects and furniture. These projects involved a complex mix of Renaissance and rococo and Eastern influences. They announced the stylistic eclecticism of the nineteenth century and occasionally prefigured the unexpected formal coherence of art nouveau.

COURTESY RIZZOLI

Peggy Guggenheim with Giacometti's *Woman Walking* and Magritte's *Empire of Light*

The tastemaker has a go-my-own-way imagination, but he or she is also a public-spirited sort. Austin, Barr, and Guggenheim understood that they might be seen as oddballs; in the 1930s and 1940s even Barr, despite his sober and scholarly demeanor, was regarded by many of the Modern's trustees as a slightly unstable provocateur. But these were also tastemakers who respected the public enough to believe that museumgoers could take the leaps that they had taken. Their idiosyncratic elitist attitudes were grounded in the belief that many other people would see what they saw. Even Beckford could be rated an agent of stylistic change within a democratic society. Although in many ways the most solitary of men, he was fascinated by the public's interest in his pursuits, observing in 1815 that "the craze for seeing [Fonthill] Abbey grows like the Tower itself." The transformations that Beckford and then, a century later, Barr, Austin, and Guggenheim effected were not so much from the top down as they were a sort of shove from the side—a nudge at the culture that caused dramatic shifts in attitude. Perhaps this is how taste always evolves in democratic societies.

The lives of Austin and Guggenheim have a high-bohemian kind of society-page allure. Reading about the Paper Ball at the Wadsworth Atheneum in 1936, for which Tchelitchew supervised a crew that used heaps of elaborately worked newspaper to create a rococo fantasyland, or the beautiful apartments and country places all over Europe that Guggenheim moved into and out of with an assortment of friends and lovers, a reader cannot be blamed for feeling a little envious. But the gathering sense of how much these people actually accomplished, and with an ever-enlarging public, can leave us stunned.

After Chick Austin died in 1957, an exhibition was organized by the Wadsworth Atheneum and the Ringling Museum in Sarasota, Florida, where he had been director after leaving Hartford in 1945. The catalogue includes fascinating texts by friends of Austin's, among them Lincoln Kirstein, with whom Austin was initially involved in bringing Balanchine

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to America; the architectural historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock; the curator and collector James Thrall Soby; and Julien Levy, the dealer who gave Joseph Cornell and Arshile Gorky shows in the 1940s. That catalogue, full of the testimony of Austin's partners in avant-garde struggle, gives precisely the sense of the man's imagination that is missing in Eugene Gaddis's animated yet somehow dutiful biography.

Levy has something very interesting to say about the mysterious process by which Austin, while often seeming to do nothing but have a good time, affected people's perceptions. Recalling Austin in action, Levy comes up with the odd yet apt image of a tuning fork: "It is the felicitous function of a tuning fork not only to set the standard to which an entire orchestra may harmonize, but sometimes to set up responsive vibrations in quite disparate elements standing mute until given the pitch by that unerring arbiter." This metaphor explains a good deal, and not just about Austin. The tastemaker functions less as a leader of men than as an activator of sensibilities that are latent in the public. Such a person is a catalyst, operating in a way that is transparent or oblique. Tastemakers may have an authoritarian aspect, but they are not dictators so much as they are persuaders, convinced that they can set off vibrations in a democratic and even populist environment.

IT IS THE optimism of the early twentieth-century tastemakers that seems most incredible to us now. The feeling for art has not vanished, but we are less sure than we were seventy-five years ago that the spread of artistic enthusiasm is always a good thing. As today's museumgoers struggle with the slick packaging that dominates so many highly touted shows, they may find themselves wondering if the very possibility of an intense, one-on-one experience is threatened by the skyrocketing popularity of art. They may worry that the very things that they love are going to be swallowed up by what Kierkegaard described as the phantom that is "the public"—"a monstrous abstraction, an all-embracing something which is nothing, a mirage."

Does there inevitably come a point, when more and more individuals have a feeling for art, at which all those feelings become standard-issue feelings? There are certainly a good many people working in our museums and arts organizations who seem to believe that this is the case. They regard the public not as a group of individuals but as a monstrous abstraction—as a mirage. How could a tastemaker, even with the best intentions, give a nudge to a mirage? The very idea of the tastemaker may now be a paradox. We may be entering a time when what we must celebrate is the individuality, the privacy, even the loneliness of taste. To affirm the solitariness of taste may be the best way, right now, to celebrate the things we love.

II.

PUBLISHERS SIGN UP books about tastemakers because they see marketable products in people who are at the center of the action; and biographers, eager to keep their editors happy, go heavy on the social side of their subjects and light on the culture. Of course tastemakers often invite this kind of treatment. Peggy Guggenheim set the pattern for all subsequent treatments of her life with her autobiography, in which she detailed her lovers and other entanglements with a frankly amused tone that has made the book a kind of classic. The first version, published in 1946, was called *Out of This Century*; a later edition, with new material, is titled *Confessions of an Art Addict*. There is something likable about Guggenheim's sensuous high spirits, her eagerness for bed partners with brains and looks, and her willingness to go with one or the other when the combination eluded her.

Beckford, the son of a famous politician whose family had made a fortune with sugar plantations in Jamaica, was imperious but also passionate. He caused a scandal as a young man by falling in love with an aristocratic youth; he married, but had little to do with his two daughters after his wife's early death; he was a fanatical aesthete, but also an avid mountain climber when young, and he was still going riding every day in his later years. With Beckford the hunger for experience—his travels, his collections, his sexual adventures—can have a fabulist's quality. As for Chick Austin, he strikes me as a too-calculating sort, not a man whom it is easy to warm to. And yet what most likely will hold the reader's attention in the new biography is his matinee-idol aspect: his dark good looks, his skills as a party planner, his bisexuality.

It does not take a psychologist to explain that a huge appetite for sensuous experience (and an inclination to advertise that appetite) is in some instances linked to an avidity for art and for the promotion of art. Not all great tastemakers are exhibitionists or hedonists, of course; Barr impressed people as being a singularly ascetic personality. What is more interesting, and apparently more difficult to explain, is how a hunger for the delights of the eye can take on an evangelical dimension. In Anton Gill's account, Peggy Guggenheim seems little more than a party animal stumbling through life with the right modern accessories; but it is Gill who never finds his footing. He simply cannot get hold of the ideas that were so thick in the air that Guggenheim breathed. More frustrating is the case of Eugene Gaddis, Austin's biographer, who has for years been the archivist at the Wadsworth Atheneum. He is no doubt the world expert on Austin, and yet he seems unable to ever really get beyond the cocktail chatter. Gaddis's Austin is a vain, clever man; the fire and ice that enabled him to put over an extraordinarily advanced program in a very conservative town is reduced to Style-section p.r. I am left wondering if a biography can ever do justice to a tastemaker. Tastemaking, after all, is a way of transcending biography, of surpassing one's individuality by becoming the agent for some great idea of style and stylistic change.

THE VERY EXTRAVAGANCE of the tastemakers, their endless interests and multiplying enthusiasms, can confuse the issue. At the recent Beckford exhibition at New York's Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, the profusion of tiny gold objects and spoons made of semi-precious stones and oriental ceramics with rococo or Neoclassical mounts brought a high-end Liberace to mind. Beckford was addicted to ornamentation, to figuring and filigree and arabesques, and I can see how a visitor might be put off by such stultifying opulence. Yet behind the gaudiness of Beckford's taste there was an abiding sense of the craftsman's feeling for materials as a springboard for formal experimentation.

The exoticism of Beckford's taste was fueled by a determination to grasp the many ways in which form can become feeling. One singular example on display was a magnificent thirteenth-century Syrian glass ewer with enameled designs of polo players. The Bard show also included an imposing twelfth-century Limoges enamel reliquary, now in the Metropolitan. At one time or another Beckford owned most of the finest examples of seventeenth-century Japanese export lacquer work in existence, though none were included in the exhibition. Also absent were any of the greatest paintings that Beckford collected, by Raphael and Memling and Titian, which are now among the treasures of some of the world's major museums.

Beckford's taste is not easy to get a fix on, but that is probably because he was into so many things. Over the course of his life he bought and sold a number of collections. A recent volume of his corre-

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spondence with his booksellers shows him closely following the popular illustrated books of his day, collecting fine examples of *Landscape Annuals* and gift books that were illustrated by Samuel Prout and Turner, who had done watercolors of Fonthill Abbey. After Fonthill, Beckford's architectural interests shifted from the Gothic to the bold classicism that informed Lansdown Tower, which he built on the outskirts of Bath, where he spent his later years.

That structure, with its play of simplified volumes, is not unrelated to John Soane's work. Beckford and Soane knew each other, and Beckford's eclecticism, which at its best suggests a magical kaleidoscopic lucidity, brings to mind Soane's Museum in London, that most enduring example of early nineteenth-century taste. (Soane's Hogarths, to further complicate the story, were originally in the collection of Beckford's father.) Both Beckford and Soane were figures in the romanticization of taste. They reveled in the period's deepening understanding of stylistic variety, in the sense (based on new archeological and historical research) of precisely how Greek classicism differed from the Roman variety, of how the Romanesque became the Gothic.

The range of Beckford's interests might suggest an almost anarchic viewpoint, except that it was in the nature of the Romantic imagination to believe that all human expression is united by some deep commonality of feeling. And this idea of the freedom of style as rooted in an essential and singular impulse was in turn related to ideas about the nature of individuality and freedom that were electrifying Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. That man might express himself through many different kinds of art, and that these many forms might have an underlying unity, accorded with democratic ideas about the relationship between the individual and the group. It may seem odd to speak of a democratic strain in the taste of William Beckford, a legendary snob who traveled with dozens of servants and lived off a fortune based on colonial wealth in the West Indies; but Beckford was, after all, the son of a self-made family. His aristocratic tastes were a romantic gamble, not a hereditary privilege.

In 1930 Sacheverell Sitwell (another man whose lofty status as a tastemaker has not been done biographical justice) published an essay on "Beckford and Beckfordism" that places Beckford within the "break-up of classicism," at "that difficult point where the Ancient ends and the Modern begins." Sitwell argues that Beckford was conscious of the shifting political environment; he knew that "the presumption and the psychological daring of rich men were drawing to their end." Of his Gothic novel *Vathek*, Sitwell observes that "the nearer the world came to the beginnings of materialism, industry, and child-labour, the more did it become inclined to listen to ghost stories." Beckford's life and writings, Sitwell argues, "as well as the actual collecting, or acquisitive side of his nature, were concerned equally with virtu, with objects or projects of virtuosity." I think Sitwell wants the word "virtu" to linger there, suggesting its close family relationship with virtue. Carlyle, in *Frederick the Great*, had spoken of a nation sinking from "virtue to virtu," and Sitwell might have been interested in the idea of the individual moving in the opposite direction by means of a taste for art. The absorption in craft, which is a celebration of virtuosity, thus functions metaphorically, as a transformation of the raw materials out of which art is created into the independent-spiritedness of taste, which is a kind of virtue.

THE IDEA OF art, we are often told, is an eighteenth-century invention. That is a proposition of which too much can be made, for even if the Greeks had no word for art, the creators of the Parthenon obviously understood that forms, organized by the hand of man, have a clarifying emotional impact. What was new in the eighteenth century was the belief that craft and imagination, combined in some completely personal way, are an essential expression of an individual's nature. That is the modern idea of art, the idea that still dominates or is only now fading.

The tastemakers' purview is the hard-to-map territory where private and public tastes overlap. And the central conundrum of their work is a question that often circulates around Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, namely, how the judgment of taste, which is so much a matter of private and immediate experience, can also be universal, a matter of what the group knows. And that is a question that takes us to the crux of the democratic experience, to the mysterious process by which what an individual knows and feels can be related to what a community knows and feels.

The central problem of the avant-garde—the problem of transforming a radically individual form of expression into an expression that is understood by many people—is not unrelated to a kind of democratic yearning. The avant-garde believes that its aloneness will be temporary, that eventually the many will feel what the few first felt. Thus Beckford's Fonthill Abbey inspired the Houses of Parliament. Thus Van Gogh, in his lifetime almost alone with his feelings and his paintings, turned out, fifty years later, to be the artist to whom almost everybody could respond. The point is not that the public has been brainwashed; it is that what one individual can see, sense, and feel, many other individuals can see, sense, and feel, too.

CHICK AUSTIN, ALFRED BARR, and Peggy Guggenheim, who all became leaders in the second quarter of the twentieth century, were part of the last generation that fully embraced this kind of wildly optimistic vision. The value of Sylvia Gordon Kantor's new study of Barr is that it focuses on his experiences as a graduate student at Harvard and tells us precisely what Paul J. Sachs taught in his famous museum-studies course. Kantor's book, which began life as a doctoral dissertation, is somewhat dry; she is not interested in the chic of the museum world. But certainly Gaddis's biography of Austin would have benefited from a harder look at some of the material that Kantor provides. For what both Austin and Barr learned from Sachs was in part how to "get the word out": the nitty-gritty of how museums work, of how you turn collectors and dealers into collaborators, plan an exhibition, build a collection, organize a staff. Sachs and others at Harvard were also strong believers in connoisseurship; and the detailed examination of individual objects, which on the most practical level was a basis for attributions and authentications, led a more exalted double life as a celebration of formal values. This was a tradition at Harvard, where Berenson had studied, and where his emphasis on authentication through close stylistic observation (of the shapes of ears, for instance) remained influential.

Barr had come to Harvard after spending his undergraduate years at Princeton. Kantor makes the point that Princeton emphasized a different approach to the arts, one more focused on the cultural contexts. This was related to the ideas of Riegl and Wölfflin, who inspired in their followers a sensitivity to the impact that national and historical characteristics have on style as well as to the unfolding of the history of style as a dialectical process. Kantor perhaps does not emphasize enough that both these approaches—Harvard's close analysis of individual works, Princeton's organization of large numbers of works into stylistic groups and evolutions—are grounded in a belief that there is some language or vocabulary or grammar of form that underlies the mutability of forms, that there is some unifying power that inheres in all forms. The hands-on practicality of museum work, at least as Barr and Austin came to understand it, was thus animated by a philo-

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sophical idea that a museum has an obligation to convey to the public both the infinite variety and the overarching universality of form.

III.

A BIOGRAPHER WHO takes on a subject as complicated as Alfred H. Barr Jr. would be unwise to insist on associating him with a crystal-clear concept of good taste. Taste, at least as Barr or Austin or Guggenheim understood it, probably always had the element of unpredictability or risk that one associates with a gyroscope, going this way and that, but grounded somehow, although it will also sometimes fail. Taste is a matter of quality and qualities; it may be only through the apprehension of qualities that we experience quality. That taste is both a one and a many gives it a kind of complexity that can be related to the very complexity of democratic society. And finding the thread that runs through a person's taste may be as difficult as finding the attitudes that unify a heterogeneous population.

In the case of Peggy Guggenheim, Anton Gill acknowledges but underplays one key to her viewpoint. Although he is glad to tell us that she was an enthusiastic reader of Berenson when she was a young woman, he might have underscored the modern logic of Berenson's formalist approach to the Renaissance by reminding readers of Berenson's early admiration for Cézanne and Matisse. Berenson's great lesson—that you look closely, that you see what forms reveal—was, as Gill suggests, an open sesame for Guggenheim, a preparation for the experience of Brancusi and Picasso and Kandinsky and Surrealism during her European years, and deep background when she was looking at Pollock, Motherwell, and the other younger American artists who became the central concern of her Art of This Century Gallery in New York.

These new studies of Austin and Barr define modern taste far more rigidly than their subjects did. Kantor repeatedly refers to Barr's "modernist" taste, but this is not a term that Barr himself used often, if at all. He tended to refer to "modern masters," "modern works of art," "modern movements," "progressive phases": those phrases all appear in a brochure that was published in 1929 to announce the formation of the Museum of Modern Art. I suspect that "modernist" was still in many respects a pejorative term when Barr was starting out in the 1920s. In accounts of the Armory Show in 1913, "modernist" was a word used often by the thumbs-down people; the conservative critic Kenyon Cox spoke skeptically about "the modernists."

The evolution of the term "modernist," at least in America, may recapitulate that of an older term of style such as "Gothic," going from pejorative to purely descriptive, except that "modernist" has come to suggest not modern art as such but a particular view of modern art. When Kantor refers to Barr's "modernist" taste, she is perhaps unwittingly framing his taste in terms of a later viewpoint, specifically the idea expressed by Clement Greenberg in his essay "Modernist Painting," from which she quotes. Kantor seems to believe that Barr would concur with Greenberg's idea (in the 1940 "Towards a Newer Laocoon") that "the purely plastic or abstract qualities of the work of art are the only ones that count." I don't think that is how Barr saw modern art; he certainly remained very conscious of the power of narrative, of symbols, of subject matter in general. In Barr's museum, Picasso's *Guernica* had a central place, and there are few works of twentieth-century art that aim to be so much more than the sum of their "purely plastic or abstract qualities."

FOR BARR, AUSTIN, AND Guggenheim, modern art had an openness, a multi-facetedness. Its power was in some essential way tied to the power of

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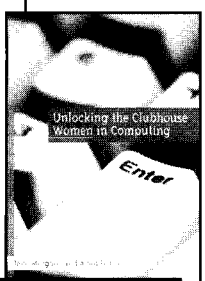

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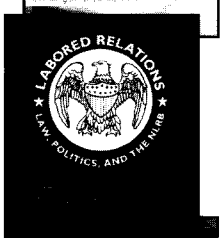

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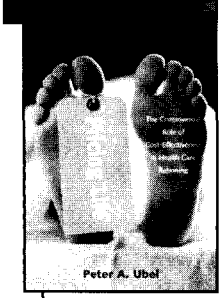

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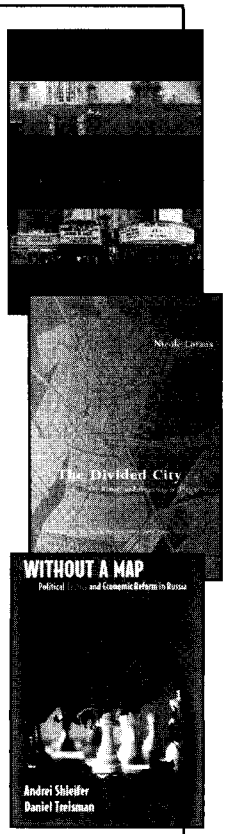

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form, but that power could be constantly re-invented and re-imagined, taking on an endless variety of shapes. It was thus, again, an idea related to democratic values, to the range of expressions that are possible, even within some essential principle of consistency or equality. Greenberg's ideas, which receive what is often thought to be their clearest expression in "Modernist Painting," might be regarded as signaling a gathering skepticism about the efficacy of a multi-faceted, democratic taste. But however we interpret Greenberg, his viewpoint is very far from that of Barr and Austin, who were interested in the purest of geometric abstractions *and* the wildest of Surrealist fantasies. Both Barr and Guggenheim were enthusiastic about the encyclopedic nature of modern style. Even Austin, who is often best remembered as advocating the magic realism and neo-romanticism of Tchelitchew and his circle, was the man who bought both a Balthus and a Mondrian for the Wadsworth Atheneum in the mid-1930s. Which might remind us that twenty years later, in 1956, the Modern simultaneously mounted the first retrospectives of Balthus and Pollock.

Was the eclecticism of these museum programs motivated by a desire to hold the attention of an easily distracted public? That may have been a factor, but I believe that something more fundamental was at stake. The variety of Barr's and Austin's interests was grounded in a belief that a celebration of the individuality of artistic expression was also an affirmation of the essential unity of artistic expression. An eloquent statement of this idea can be found in an essay that Mondrian contributed in 1942 to the first catalogue of Art of This Century, which also included essays by Arp and Breton. "Not everyone realizes," Mondrian explains, "that in all plastic art, even in the most naturalistic work, the natural form and color, are always, to some extent, transformed. Actually while this may not be directly perceived, the tension of line and form, as well as the intensity of color are always increased. Plastic experience demonstrates that the natural appearance of things is not to be established in its essential realism, but must be transformed in order to evoke aesthetic sensation." This, I think, is a basic statement of modern taste, with which Barr and Austin as well as Guggenheim would have agreed.

Accounts of Art of This Century generally focus on Frederick Kiesler's notorious gallery décor, with its curving walls, paintings mounted on "baseball bats," and flashing lights; or on Guggenheim's troubles with Pollock, a crazily unbalanced man to whom she was so generous. Yet all you have to do is read the statements by Mondrian, Breton, and Arp that Guggenheim published to see how broad her viewpoint was, how she saw the need to go beyond the superficiality of style and to judge the character of the transformations involved. If Greenberg's view, at least in "Modernist Painting," suggests an ever-tightening focus as the essence of modern art, Guggenheim's taste suggests the continuous multiplication of possibilities. Each transformation, whether it involved a particular face, a fantastical landscape, or a pure abstraction, was a version of some fundamental process. This idea was central for Picasso, who received his first American museum retrospective at Chick Austin's Atheneum in 1934. (That exhibition had a deep impact on Wallace Stevens, whose poem "The Man with the Blue Guitar" was inspired in part by his encounter with a Blue Period Picasso; but Gaddis has hardly anything to say about the impact that Austin's Atheneum had on Stevens.) Of course Picasso was also a central figure for Barr, as he was for William Rubin, Barr's successor at the Modern, whose final Picasso show was "Picasso and Portraiture: Representation and Transformation."

AUSTIN AND GUGGENHEIM, who were both theatrical personalities, could not have helped but be entranced by the possibility of artistic transformation. Austin had a second career in the theater, acting in productions in Hartford and, later, masterminding a summer theater, the Windham Playhouse, in New Hampshire. Theatricality is a way of masking, but also of accenting or italicizing certain aspects of one's personality. Some will feel that it was inconsistent of Austin to have designed for himself a Bauhaus office at the Wadsworth Atheneum even as he was buying the most highly stylized Baroque art for the museum's collections, but one can as easily argue that these are two ways of expressing some fundamental idea of style as extreme expression. Although we tend to think of the modern logic of form as leading to the simplification of form, complication is also a way of glorifying form, as in the intricate rhythmic moves of Rubens or Magnasco. Austin was very influenced by the thinking of Osbert and Sacheverell Sitwell, who in London in the 1920s founded something called the Magnasco Society, and pressed for a reconsideration of Baroque and rococo art, which they admired for a kind of artifice that could be related to the anti-naturalism of modern painting.

Although Austin's and Guggenheim's variegated enthusiasms were not as disparate as they are sometimes believed to have been, it would be a mistake to insist that they all fit neatly together. There was something essentially eccentric about the vantage points of these tastemakers, and it ought to be honored. Eccentricity has a place in tastemaking—I mean a serious kind of eccentricity, a self-conscious willfulness, what might be called a stylization of the Kantian idea of judgment. Eccentricity could be the yeast that kept a tastemaker's relationship with the public lively. It is that shove from the side again.

Barr, who tends to be remembered for his probity and sobriety, was seen by some as idiosyncratic, and they included Stephen C. Clark, the president of the Modern, chairman of its board of trustees, and a distinguished collector of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings. It was Clark who fired Barr from the directorship of the Modern in 1943, and it is well to remember that it was on account of what Clark felt was the eccentricity of Barr's taste. Russell Lynes, in *Good Old Modern*, his unrivaled history of the museum, writes that "Clark found Barr's taste unaccountable, erratic, and, he was free to say in some instances, frivolous." What is said to have pushed Clark to fire Barr was the director's presentation of "a highly decorated shoe shine stand" by a man named Joe Milone and an exhibition of work by Morris Hirschfield, another self-taught artist. Milone and Hirschfield are what are now called outsider artists. I do not believe that Barr had an inflated idea of their worth. His was a museum, after all, in which Picasso and Matisse held center stage. Still, he saw something in these outsiders, especially in Hirschfield's work, which jibed with his let's-try-it attitude toward tastemaking. After the firing, Barr retreated to a corner of the Modern's library for four years. In 1947 he became director of collections, a post that outshone the position of director of the museum in the years until Barr's retirement, in 1967.

IV.

ARE THERE TASTEMAKERS today? There are certainly people with an acute feeling for works of art. Some of them have a public profile. And yet the chances of their using their strong feelings about art as a catalyst to build an audience seem slim at best. In place of tastemaking, which involves a unique combination of ferocious individualism and high-spirited consensus-building, we now have the packaging or ratification of what somebody or other thinks others ought to think or already do think.

The kinds of commercial art galleries that embraced an unsung artistic sensibility and aimed to put it over with the public are virtually unknown in New York today. They have been replaced by galleries that

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Arabian Fables (I)

How the Arabs soften up world opinion with fanciful myths.

Josef Goebbels, the infamous propaganda minister of the Nazis, had it right. Just tell people big lies often enough and they will believe them. The Arabs have learned that lesson well. They have swayed world opinion by endlessly repeating myths and lies that have no basis in fact.

What are some of these myths?

The "Palestinians". That is the fundamental myth. The concept of "Palestinians" is one that did not exist until about 1948, when the Arab inhabitants, of what until then was Palestine, wished to differentiate themselves from the Jews. Until then, the Jews were the Palestinians. There was the Palestinian Brigade of Jewish volunteers in the British World War II Army (at a time when the Palestinian Arabs were in Berlin hatching plans with Adolf Hitler for world conquest and how to kill all the Jews); there was the Palestinian Symphony Orchestra (all Jews, of course); there was *The Palestine Post*; and so much more.

The Arabs who now call themselves "Palestinians" do so in order to persuade a misinformed world that they are a distinct nationality and that "Palestine" is their ancestral homeland. But they are no distinct nationality at all. They are the same — in language, custom, and tribal and family ties — as the Arabs of Syria, Jordan, and beyond. There is no more difference between the "Palestinians" and the other Arabs of those countries than there is between, say, the citizens of Minnesota and those of Wisconsin.

What's more, many of the "Palestinians", or their immediate ancestors, came to the area attracted by the prosperity created by the Jews, in what previously had been pretty much of a wasteland.

The nationhood of the "Palestinians" is a myth.

The "West Bank". Again, this is a concept that did not exist until 1948, when the army of the Kingdom of Transjordan, together with five other Arab armies, invaded the Jewish state of Israel, on the very day of its creation.

In what can almost be described as a Biblical miracle, the ragtag Jewish forces defeated the combined Arab might. But Transjordan stayed in possession of Judea and Samaria and the eastern part of Jerusalem. The Jordanians expelled all the Jews from the area that they occupied, destroyed all Jewish houses of worship, and renamed as "West Bank" the territories that had been Judea and Samaria since time immemorial.

The attempt, quite successful, was to persuade an uninformed world that these territories were ancestral parts of the Jordanian Arab Kingdom (itself a very recent creation of British power diplomacy).

> "The web of lies and myths that the Arab propaganda machine has created plays an important role in the unrelenting quest to destroy the State of Israel. What a shame that the world has accepted most of it!"

Even after the total rout of the Arabs in the 1967 Six-Day War, in which the Jordanians were driven out of Judea/Samaria and of Jerusalem, they and the world continued to call this territory the "West Bank", a geographical and political concept that cannot be found on any except the most recent maps.

The concept of the "West Bank" is a myth.

The "Occupied Territories". After the victorious Six-Day War, during which the Israeli army defeated the same cabal of Arabs that had invaded the country in 1948, Israel regained possession of Judea/Samaria, which the Jordanians had illegally occupied for 19 years; of the Gaza Strip, which had been occupied by the Egyptians, but which had never been part of their country; and of the Golan Heights, a plateau the size of Queens, which, though originally part of Palestine, had been assigned to Syria by British-French agreement.

The last sovereign in Judea/Samaria and in Gaza was the British mandatory power — and before it was the Ottoman Empire. All of Palestine, including what is now the Kingdom of Jordan, was, by the Balfour Declaration, destined to be the Jewish National Home. How then could the Israelis possibly be "occupiers" in their own territory? Who would be the sovereign and who the rightful inhabitants?

The concept of "occupied territories" in reference to Judea/Samaria and Gaza is an Arab propaganda myth.

Unable so far to destroy Israel on the battlefield — though they are feverishly preparing for their next assault — the Arabs are now trying to overcome and destroy Israel by their acknowledged "policy of stages". That policy is to get as much land as possible carved out of Israel "by peaceful and diplomatic" means, so as to make Israel indefensible and softened up for the final assault. The web of lies and myths that the Arab propaganda machine has created plays an important role in the unrelenting quest to destroy the State of Israel. What a shame that the world has accepted most of it!

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simply will not take on an artist unless the salability of the work is a proven thing, or so they imagine. Museums and arts organizations think not in terms of individuals but in terms of audiences; and since they cannot see the person for the people, the very idea of the power of persuasion becomes a marketer's gambit, nothing more. Today you do not build an audience, you access one.

The growth of the contemporary art world and of the audiences that it attracts is a hot media topic, and in recent years, as museums have become increasingly crowded and sometimes audience-unfriendly, the reports have not always been celebratory. By now a blame game is in full swing, which generally involves some kind of headline-grabbing confrontation between the people who like to flash their elitist credentials and the people who like to flash their populist ones. What has been forgotten amid all the finger-pointing is that the great museums were triumphs of tastemaking, and that these triumphs were essentially liberal in spirit, grounded in a belief in the simultaneously individual and communicable nature of artistic taste.

The evolution of tastemaking—and thus the evolution of museums—depended on a gradual fusion of art for art's sake and public-spiritedness. James J. Sheehan, in his new book, *Museums in the German Art World: From the End of the Old Regime to the Rise of Modernism* (Oxford), gives a remarkably lucid picture of this development, at least as it occurred in one European country. Tastemakers saw the possibility that the aesthete's ferociously unique experiences could be infectious; that many people were capable of discovering related feelings in themselves. Like all truly liberal visions, the tastemaker's was based on trust, on optimism, and has proven vulnerable to demagoguery both from the left and from the right.

Fifty years ago, when Peggy Guggenheim had left New York and settled in Venice with her collection, when Austin was spending his last years at the Ringling Museum in Sarasota, and when Barr and the Modern were at the zenith of their prestige, there already were worrisome signs that an expanding yet independent-minded audience was turning into a kind of parody of itself, which Harold Rosenberg dubbed "the herd of independent minds." In the 1960s, Dwight Macdonald coined the phrase "midcult" to describe art that mimicked avant-garde techniques for mass appeal; his focus was more on literature than on visual art, but the analogy holds. Tastemaking, which had been predicated on creating an audience out of nowhere as an act of faith, was beginning to turn into trendspotting, a kind of intellectual parlor game. The audience that the tastemakers had built was becoming an object of sociological study, and was coming to regard itself in that light, as a constituency with generalized needs and opinions. There is a false note to some of Rosenberg's and Macdonald's acute comments about the art audience, and it comes from their habit of treating the audience as an aggregate, a post-Marxist equivalent of the masses, about which an intellectual can proceed to make oh-so-clever remarks.

IF YOU REALLY respect the audience, then you are going to be reluctant to characterize the audience generally. You are going to believe that each member of the audience is involved in a process of self-discovery, which is after all what anybody who goes to art is after. Barr liked to emphasize the slowness and even the unreliability of the processes through which we acquire a true understanding of art. "Who is to say what is really important?" he wondered in 1954. "The public is often slow to comprehend; critics and museum people are notoriously blind. Even the artist is no guide. Whistler's contempt for Cézanne was equalled only by Cézanne's contempt for Gauguin."

The answer seemed to be that one must do much in the museum, collect widely, let things play out. Barr saw the museum in a dynamic relationship with society. The audience that the sociologists describe and that the marketers target is an audience that the tastemaker cannot reach, because it is an audience that already imagines that it knows everything about itself, or at least that it knows all it wants to know. We have all heard people say that they remember a time when they were glad to see crowds at the museums, but now they hope that nobody will be there. This is not just a question of comfort levels in the galleries. It grows out of a sense that museumgoers are numb, that there are no discoveries in the air.

If Barr, who died in 1981, remains the great enigma among tastemakers, it is because he played so essential a role in bringing us to where we are now. The idea of the activist museum was Barr's idea. He wanted the museum to lead in matters of industrial design and have an influence on Madison Avenue; he wanted the museum to be jittery with activity, with movies, classes, temporary exhibitions. Barr and the team that he brought together invented many of the methods of selling museum programs to the public that have by now come to pose a clear and present danger to the one-on-one experience of art. When Dwight Macdonald wrote a profile of Barr for *The New Yorker* in 1953, he quoted many commentators who already in the 1940s were complaining that the Modern was a circus. The public, Macdonald reported, is "lured in by ingenious showmanship and by appeals to appetites that are a lot more mundane than a desire to contemplate works of art." "The joint," he announced, "has been jumping for twenty-five years."

A STRONG ARGUMENT can be made that the circus atmosphere that Barr pioneered at the Museum of Modern Art has simply been copied, on a bolder, less elegant scale, at institutions such as the Guggenheim Bilbao and Tate Modern. Not true. There is a fundamental difference between the sell that was invented by the Modern and the sell that now dominates the museum world—at the Modern, as everywhere else. For Barr and his generation, art was sold to individuals. Now art is sold to groups.

How can you see the difference? You can see it in the ways that exhibitions are laid out and catalogues are organized, in an attention to detail that is predicated on the firm belief that people will notice. Everybody who writes about Barr describes how he would agonize over each wall label and weigh the meaning and the impact of the way each painting or sculpture was placed. He believed that you persuaded people inch by inch, moment by moment, view by view. In everything that Barr wrote and said there was a plain-spoken eloquence, a sunny rationality.

Which is not to say that the Museum of Modern Art could not be dramatic, even melodramatic. The curators in charge were certainly pioneers when it came to the theatrical arrangement of exhibitions and associated events. As for Austin and Guggenheim, they could be risk-takers to an almost mad degree. The shows that they presented could be so excitable, so crazy, that they probably turned off as many visitors as they turned on. But the numbers game was not the real game for these people. They aimed to grab gallery- and museumgoers one by one. The tastemakers educated, prodded, startled, electrified, enraged, seduced. What they would never do was assume that the public would just go along.

Today we are mired in a go-along art world. Its symbols are the huge new museum complexes—the Getty in Los Angeles, Tate Modern in London, the Guggenheim Bilbao—where the marketing plans are closely linked with tourism and the crowds often seem dazed by the scale of the surroundings and unsure as to exactly where the art is being kept. The go-along spirit has also had a pervasive effect on moderately scaled arts institutions, where "small is beautiful" is

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being preached as the antidote to "big is exciting." This season two new sliver-sized museums opened in New York: the Neue Galerie, devoted to early twentieth-century German and Austrian art, and the permanent home of the American Folk Art Museum (formerly the Museum of American Folk Art). These are admirable endeavors, true contributions to the life of the city, but there is also something about them that goes down a little too easily. I miss some essential vehemence in the presentation. The Klimts and the Schieles at the Neue Galerie seem to be offered mainly as part of a cozy evocation of a black-and-gold Austrian fin-de-siècle. And at the American Folk Art Museum the works on display are tucked so suavely into the jazzily angular architecture that the delicate surfaces of weather vanes and textiles and ceramics register as little more than atmospherics. There is a slickly marketed aura about these museums. I get the uncomfortable feeling that an audience had been identified, signed, sealed, and delivered before the doors even opened.

When tastemaking has degenerated into bland good taste, as it has at the Neue Galerie and the American Folk Art Museum, or into demagoguery, as it has at Tate Modern and the Guggenheim Bilbao, there is still art to sustain us. What feels authentic now are precisely the occasions when nobody seems to care about whether taste is being made or not, when artists or dealers or curators seem to be operating without any calculations about the audience. Of course any museumgoer can elude the calculations. A great Klee or Schiele at the Neue Galerie or a magnificent piece of Pennsylvania German calligraphy at the American Folk Art Museum has a freestanding power that mocks the marketers who think only of how many people have come in this hour, this day, this week.

If you care about art, there is always something terrific to see. But the promise of a sophisticated public taste—of a community of taste—seems more tenuous than it has in several generations. By now the very idea of public taste has become such a muddle that the best hope that many of us can see is to pull back and concentrate on those individual experiences, which are still animated by the sense that they are communicable. And if that is not so today, we can still dream that it might be so in the future, for there was a time in the past when tastemaking was a dream that became a reality.

This dream was based on developments in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when more and more people were taking art seriously, so that ultimately, as Max Eastman, that unconventional Marxist, observed in 1934 in his book *Art and the Life of Action*, "orchestral music in its purest forms is loved, and loved by all kinds and classes of people, who throng out as though to a religious or patriotic revival or a gladiatorial arena, to drink the experience of it." Tastemaking in music, at least during the nineteenth century, was sometimes in advance of tastemaking in painting. And if pure sound could appeal to a wide audience, why couldn't pure form, which so many moderns believed had a comparable effect on the imagination? When Barr hung Malevich's *White on White* at the Museum of Modern Art, or when Peggy Guggenheim gave her support to Pollock at Art of This Century, they were taking the gamble that extreme artistic experience could prove infectious. They had their instincts and they had their optimism. Those are two things that seem to be in very short supply today. ■

Effects and Causes

By James Wood

The Complete Works of Isaac Babel edited by Nathalie Babel translated by Peter Constantine

(W.W. Norton, 1,072 pp., $39.95)

I.

Isaac Babel's writing was both short-legged and short-lived: his stories are truly short, and the best of them were produced in two quick firings, two claps of history, between 1923 and 1925 and between 1929 and 1934. This sense of compacted intensity is appropriate, because Babel's prose is distinguished by its determination to render a sudden essence. He was himself obsessed with reduction, with omission, with the necessary famine of severe self-editing. His writing is startlingly discontinuous. In a typical Babel paragraph, each sentence seems to disavow its role in the ordinary convoy of meaning and narrative, and appears to want to begin the story anew. Here is the beginning of one of his finest stories, "My First Fee":

> To be in Tiflis in spring, to be twenty years old, and not to be loved—that is a misfortune. Such a misfortune befell me. I was working as a proofreader for the printing press of the Caucasus Military District. The Kura River bubbled beneath the windows of my attic. The sun in the morning, rising from behind the mountains, lit up the river's murky knots. I was renting a room in the attic from a newly-wed Georgian couple. My landlord was a butcher at the Eastern Bazaar. In the room next door, the butcher and his wife, in the grip of love, thrashed about like two large fish trapped in a jar. The tails of these crazed fish thumped against the partition, rocking the whole attic, which was blackened by the piercing sun....

Babel was a keen reader of Maupassant and Flaubert; but his hunger for the *mot juste* feels very different from Flaubert's. Valéry rightly complained that in Flaubert "there is always room for another detail." In Babel, we have the curious feeling that there is not enough room for another detail, that detail is clamoring to escape. The narrative advances, but sideways. And there is no patience for explanation, there is rather a battle of propositions. The sentences have lost their connective tissue: we are told that the narrator was working as a proofreader, and in the next moment we are asked to see the Kura River from the narrator's attic window. But only for a hovering second, for then we are introduced to the narrator's landlord.

Yet along with this high degree of interruption goes a jumpy kind of repetition: the word "misfortune" appears in the first sentence, and then again in the second; the Kura River appears once, and then again in the next sentence, as "the river's murky knots." The landlord and his wife are likened to a thumping fish, and the next sentence repeats this simile, in order to develop it; and the sun in the morning, which shines over the Kura River, is also the "piercing sun" that, we are later told, has blackened the attic in which the narrator lives. This might as well be a definition of modernism: rhythmic discontinuity.

Babel's prose constantly forces different temporalities together into one time

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signature. The habitual or eternal (the sun, the bubbling river) lies alongside the daily or traditional (the butcher at work in the Eastern Bazaar) and then alongside the immediate moment of the story (the young man's job, the landlord and his wife thumping like fish). But while Flaubert would observe the cosmic narratological hierarchy whereby the writer, when setting a scene, starts large and then narrows—eternal landscape followed by more recent town followed by immediate subject—Babel darts around in any order, shredding narrative etiquette and gathering all detail into the fist of an eternal present.

It is an art of great innovation, and also of some limitation. Singly experienced, Babel's stories are fizzing spots of time. Some of the *Red Cavalry* stories are vignettes of only two pages. But the reader who reads all of the stories, going through them as if through one extended work, may weary at times of this lively accumulation of omissions, and may see not only the melodrama in this work, but the high cost of Babel's vivid, grotesque, theatrical externality, which is the great lack of any inwardness in any of his characters. Babel's art may be a decisively modern one, but its diminishment when compared with Chekhov or Tolstoy is in proportion to its modern resistance to ordinariness or patience—in language, activity, and thought. In this sense, whatever Babel's final relation to Soviet ideology, his art is devoted to revolution. One may at times miss the hierarchical lento of the ancien régime.

THIS MAGNIFICENT EDITION of the complete Babel is, then, a mixed blessing. It certainly represents a triumph of translation, editing, and publishing. Beautiful to hold, scholarly and also popularly accessible, it is an enactment of love. As far as the non-Russianist can tell, Peter Constantine's translation is extraordinary. There are very few writers one reads in translation with any kind of greed for style, but Babel, thanks to Constantine, is one. Sentence after sentence—and Babel's sentences are some of the most dynamically potent in literature—gleams in its rented English, and merely to quote some of them is to credit Constantine's verbal ingenuity and flexibility: "He had a wart on his face from which a tuft of ashen, feline hair sprouted." "The green glimmer of snow." "Water trickled off the riverbanks, leaving a blue satin shadow." "The oily sparkle of its chandeliers." "The furrowed snows swarmed with polar brilliance." "Gray old men with ossified ears."

Constantine has translated everything: stories, filmscripts, the *Diary* of 1920, early and late journalism, sketches for the stories. Excellent notes, introductions, and a dense chronology make this thousand-page book the fullest edition of Babel's work in any language, including Russian. But fullness means also fullness of exposure. In addition to the revelation of Babel's limitations, there is the revelation of his journalism, which was perhaps known among scholars, but not among ordinary readers. This revelation cannot do his reputation any good.

Babel famously rode as a correspondent with the Red Cavalry in 1920, in the war that broke out between the new Soviet republic and the new nation of Poland. He wrote four dispatches for *The Red Cavalryman*, the newspaper distributed to the fighters of the cavalry. Clearly, Babel's main occupation while with the cavalry was as a silent and crafty scout for the great stories that he would write only a few years later. He was collecting, collecting: he was taking details prisoner. But it is dismaying to encounter, amid these riches of observation and language, four tinny pieces of propaganda.

Suddenly there are unpleasant juxtapositions. The savage and brilliant story "Squadron Commander Trunov" tells of the demented last hours of a wounded Soviet commander. Babel's stories frequently mixed real and fictitious names and events, and this Trunov existed, and was commander of the Thirty-Fourth Cavalry Regiment. In the story, Trunov, bleeding from a gash in his head "like rain from a haystack," has taken some Polish prisoners, and wants to kill them forthwith. He plunges his saber into the gullet of one of them, and shoots another, so that his brain "spatters" onto the hands of the narrator, who remonstrates fiercely with Trunov. Headquarters won't let you get away with this! says the narrator, to which Trunov replies: "At headquarters they'll chalk it up to the rotten life we live." Suddenly four bombers appear in the sky, and a little later Trunov is killed in the aerial bombardment. The story ends with the ironic lyricism that is characteristic of many of these tales: Trunov, the butcherer, is buried in the local town, "in a flower bed, in the public park in the middle of the town." A public park: Babel's story, a stanza written in dejection, effectively asks us to "Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!"

Yet one of Babel's propaganda pieces is a eulogy for this same Trunov, clangingly entitled "What We Need Is More Men Like Trunov!", and ending with this pronouncement: "If there were more Trunovs among us, the masters of this world would be finished." One is grateful that Babel kept his art so separate from his official work, but the suggestion of duplicity, of utterly different private and public thought, opens an abyss in the understanding of this writer—an abyss that is widened by the publication here of seven pieces of official Soviet journalism, written from Paris in 1935. By this time, late in his life, Babel is thought to have been disillusioned by Soviet tyranny, and there has been much speculation about why he did not stay in Paris. (He attended the International Congress of Writers in the city in that year.) The conclusion has been that Babel felt himself to be thoroughly a Russian writer, and could not bear to leave his native material. But the journalism, at least on its face, gives evidence of political doctrine, of revolutionary commitment.

There is an article about French schools ("our children differ very favorably from French children in strength and uncomplicated healthy cheerfulness"), and a little squib about Marseille. A great port town, says Babel, but note how the hill villas of the rich look down on the poor little back streets: "Comrades, that's capitalism for you!" And there is a piece about how Communist the suburbs of Paris have become: "A Red belt surrounds Paris, and the hour is approaching when, to the joy of all progressive men and women, the Red suburbs will unite with a Red Paris."

THE JOURNALISM, IN other words, is trash, and menacing trash. Babel's fictional prose style has much in common with Joseph Roth's, but Roth proved himself the truer observer overall, for Roth was an undeceived journalist, who visited Russia in the 1920s and early on perceived the dangers of rampant Bolshevism. Babel's *Diary*, a journal of his time with the cavalry, which was not published in his lifetime, suggests a revolutionary fervor tempered not so much by a clear-sightedness about the viciousness and the plunder of revolution itself—as kindly Babel scholars tend to claim—but by an easier clear-sightedness about the viciousness and the plunder of the brutal Cossack soldiers who were his effective colleagues-in-arms.

Babel does indeed see that "this is not a Marxist Revolution, it is a Cossack uprising that wants to win all and lose nothing." He does indeed see that "we are destroying, moving forward like a whirlwind, like lava, hated by all, life is being shattered to pieces, I am at a huge, never-ending service for the dead." But the necessity for revolution is not in doubt: "the dirt, the apathy, the hopelessness of Russian life are unbearable, the Revolution will do some good work here." Even in the *Red Cavalry* stories themselves, which constitute marvelously subtle, tragic, and often

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comic commentaries on the desecration of revolutionary activity, Babel hews to the belief that the masters—one is seen as "a pre-reform rat of a nobleman"—must be deposed, that the Catholic Church is a slippery and Jesuitical organ of aristocratic power and superstitious oppression, that the peasants have been enslaved by the profit-motive, and that revolution is and should be exportable: "Here, with the ropes of profit, the Jews had bound the Russian muzhiks to the Polish *Pans*, and the Czech settlers to the factory in Lodz."

The knowledge of Babel's ideological enthusiasm does not detract from the stories; it merely qualifies one's assessment of his complete work, an assessment only now requested by the publication of that complete work. Babel was murdered in 1940, after being accused by the NKVD of "espionage." He was, obviously, a victim of the Soviet monstrosity—but not in the way that Mandelstam and Bulgakov were its victims. There has been a tendency to see Babel as boxed in by an ideology that he barely supported. The late journalism makes that box something of a circle: Babel was killed by violence, and he was not a violent man; but he was also killed by a lie, and he had lied that lie. A Red belt had indeed surrounded not Paris, but Babel.

II.

ISAAC BABEL WAS born in Odessa in 1894. Like Kipling, he was very precocious; he had a sharp, instinctive talent for observation and narrative already in his teenage years. Gorky, whom he revered, published his early stories in 1916. To judge from the autobiographical stories that Babel wrote in later years—they are his greatest pieces of work—he grew up with an inflamed fantasy of both Jewish sickliness and non-Jewish healthiness. Two of these stories, "My First Dovecote" and "First Love," concern the pogrom of 1905. In "First Love," the little Babel sees his father beg help from a magnificent Cossack captain, seen in all his Tolstoyan grandeur in "striped trousers" and "lemon suede gloves." "Over there," says the father, "they're smashing everything I've worked for all my life, Captain." The Cossack finely replies: "I will see to it!", and does nothing at all. The contradictory vision displayed in this story, the reverence for the physical power of the Cossack and the merciless awareness of how inimical to Jews that physical power could be, runs through all of Babel's *Red Cavalry* fiction. "Like all Jews, I was short in stature, weak, and plagued by headaches," the young narrator of "My First Dovecote" tells us.

"The Awakening," another of the later autobiographical stories, set in Babel's childhood Odessa, tells of the comic episode in which Babel's father sends his young son to the local violin teacher to groom him to be a prodigy. Odessa, after all, had produced Heifetz, Zimbalist, Mischa Elman. "Our fathers, seeing they had no prospects of their own, set up a lottery for themselves. They built this lottery on the bones of their little children." But the little Babel is very bad at the violin—"sounds scraped out of my violin like iron filings"—and he plays truant, running down to the harbor with a school friend. Alas, he cannot swim. "The hydrophobia of my ancestors, the Spanish rabbis and Frankfurt money changers, dragged me to the bottom." But a "local water god," a proofreader for an Odessa newspaper, takes pity, and tries to teach him. The proofreader, divining that the little boy yearns to be a writer, accuses him of lacking a feel for nature. A real writer, says the man, must know the names of trees.

Though the story's comic frame concerns the discovery by Babel's father that his son has not been attending his violin lessons—there is shouting and tears, and fat Auntie Bobka, "quivering with sobs," restrains the father from nearly murdering his son—the heart of the story has to do with "awakening." The narrator awakens into healthy nature, and dies to the deadly, sickly forcing of traditional Jewish aspiration. "How late I learned the essential things in life! In my childhood, nailed to the Gemara, I led the life of a sage, and it was only later, when I was older, that I began to climb trees."

But the writer, of course, has always really chosen a "sickly" trade; Babel knows this as well as Thomas Mann did. And writing can become sickly insofar as it cooperates with, connives at, and even darkly lusts after abuses of so-called "healthy" power. "The Story of My Dovecote," in which a dove is crushed against the face of little Babel, was written after, and perhaps contains an echo of, one of the *Red Cavalry* stories, "My First Goose," in which the narrator, a bespectacled writer, is billeted with a group of rough Cossacks who exclude him from their company. Only when the writer has brutally killed a goose ("its head cracking beneath my boot") do the Cossacks admit the new addition, who has thus proved his mettle. Newly accepted, he reads Lenin's latest speech to them from *Pravda*, and that night, as he sleeps, his heart, "crimson with murder, screeched and bled." Again one notes the ironic closing, whereby the narrator's guilt may refer not only to his earlier brutality towards the poor goose, but more generally to the "murder" of the Cossacks, and even to the murder in Lenin's speech.

III.

FROM FLAUBERT, BABEL learned how to ration commentary; from Dostoevsky and Gorky, he learned that Russian history was a catalogue of violence and tragedy; from Gogol, he learned about grotesque portraiture; from Tolstoy, he learned that detail should be always dynamic, always attached to activity.

In his descriptions of revolutionary bloodshed in *Sentimental Education*, Flaubert surely founded the calm control of war-writing so crucial to the effects of Babel, Crane, and Hemingway. "Frédéric felt something soft under his foot; it was the hand of a sergeant in a grey overcoat who was lying face down in the gutter." When Roque fires into a crowd of prisoners and shoots someone, Flaubert writes: "There was a tremendous howl, then nothing. Something white remained on the edge of the grating." This is powerful: the withdrawal of obvious sympathy coaxes a proportionate craving for it on the reader's part, and forces us to imagine what is being left unsaid. Babel's fiction makes use of this method again and again: "There was something more Korostelyov had wanted to say, but he didn't manage to." Korostelyov has just been brutally shot by a local commissar.

The danger of this style lies in its aestheticism. A style that, as it were, refuses to get emotionally involved may seem at times to act as if it denies its own subject matter, as if the subject is not there at all. There are times when Babel's style does indeed sink into aestheticism. He invokes sunset, moon, lightning, and the sky so regularly, but with such reliable vividness, that his visual eccentricity can seem formulaic, the equivalent of Chagall's flying troikas and tilting houses. "The blue tongue of the flame mingled with the June lightning." "Smoke from tobacco melted into the blueish lightning that flashed over the steppes." "The sunset was boiling in the skies, a sunset thick as jam...." "Green lightning bolts blazed over the cupolas." "The naked shine of the moon poured over the town with unquenchable strength." "The village street lay before us, and the dying sun in the sky, round and yellow as a pumpkin, breathed its last breath." "A timid star flashed in the orange battles of sunset." The essential unnaturalness of reading a lot of stories at once is here revealed. Were these many pages the pages of a single novel, Babel would doubtless have thinned his luxuries.

But Babel's prose, despite its great sponsors, sounds like nobody else's. Much of this has to do with the extraordinary discontinuities of his writing. And much of it has to do with a related quality: exaggeration, of which Babel was a master,

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and sometimes a servant. Consider the story "The Awakening." The narrator, as we have seen, describes how the Jewish fathers bullied their sons into music. "They built this lottery on the bones of their little children." The sentence is flamingly alive—and obviously untrue. "The Awakening," in fact, abounds with sentences of the most impertinent exaggeration: "Zagursky [the local violin teacher] ran a factory that churned out child prodigies, a factory of Jewish dwarfs in lace collars and patent leather shoes." Once the boy has escaped to the harbor, "the heavy waves by the harbor wall separated me more and more from a home reeking of onions and Jewish fate." And later: "the hydrophobia of my ancestors, the Spanish rabbis and Frankfurt money changers, dragged me to the bottom."

These sentences have the Babel flair: they pounce on reality, and collapse epochs into themselves. In Babel, every narrative proposition is flauntingly rendered. Mandelstam's prose has something of this emphasis, too: in *The Noise of Time*, the poet's memoir, there appears a man who is bowed over by "an excess of Jewishness and Populism." But Babel is more extreme, reaching for wild and brilliant linkages. In "Guy de Maupassant," the narrator works for a handsome, wealthy, and well-built Jewish woman: "these women transmute the money of their resourceful husbands into the lush pink fat on their bellies, napes, and round shoulders." These sentences then accrue an extra scandal from their context. For Babel is continually asserting figurative connections—male money becomes female fat, Jewish musical prowess rests on childish bones—where such connections are not immediately apparent; and this is accomplished in paragraphs where the very idea of connection and continuity is constantly being interrupted and challenged. If his stories progress sideways, sliding from unconnected sentence to sentence, then the very sentences vault forward within themselves at the same moment.

BUT IT MUST be admitted that this can also be the mode of melodrama. (Babel read Dickens and refers to him in one of the stories.) It is no great distance from violin lessons populated by Jewish "dwarfs" to the story's final scene, in which the little boy has locked himself in the bathroom, while outside the women sob, father tears his hair, and "Auntie Bobka, quivering with sobs, was grinding her fat shoulder against the door." It is no great step from a home "reeking with onions and Jewish fate" to the somewhat excessive and even vulgar depiction, in "The Church in Novograd," one of the *Red Cavalry* stories, of the Catholic Church. In that story, the narrator sits in the kitchen of Eliza, the priest's housekeeper. "Her sponge cakes had the aroma of crucifixion. Within them was the sap of slyness and the fragrant frenzy of the Vatican." Really? And lest we think that only Catholic cakes have their own ethnic sap, we have Auntie Bobka in the story "In the Basement": "Into that pie she put the heart of our tribe, the heart that has withstood so many tribulations."

This is uncomfortably close to mere phrase-making. In particular, Babel's Odessa stories are streaked with melodrama and pantomime. The Odessa gangsters, who are forcefully rendered in some of these tales, speak only in exclamation marks ("Get out of here, you lout! ... You've clapped your eyes on a slop bucket!"); but then so does Auntie Bobka ("her fat, kindly breasts bounced in all directions"), and so does Grandfather Levy-Itskhok ("his single tooth jiggled in his mouth"). In general, it can fairly be said that Babel's stories exhibit a very wide range of characters who themselves have a rather small range of attributes. Is it fair to say that essentially all his characters, even the Jews, are Cossacks of a kind? For he tends to arrest human beings in a moment of intense singleness, so that they quiver with essence; and more often than not, since this essence is necessarily strong, his characters are blocks of appetite. Unlike Chekhov, Babel has almost no interest in the weak—except in the weak writer, silently viewing all this mayhem, violence, and bloody theater from behind his mild spectacles.

Yet the melodramatic element in Babel's work, which can produce, over time, a monotonous excitability, cannot really be separated from what is great in his work. When we examine a bad sentence in Babel, we immediately sense its kinship with a good one. Consider "his single tooth jiggled in his mouth." Or, better, this line about a nurse: "The pince-nez on Judith's nose bounced, her breasts swelled out of her starched coat." What is untrue about these sentences is that they are rendering a specific action or event—the bouncing of a pince-nez, the jiggling of a tooth—as habitual, even eternal happenings. But this swift compacting is precisely what lends Babel's best prose its remarkable, almost atomic power to create instant energy. Here is a description of staff headquarters, from "At Saint Valentine's":

> I read the documents. The snoring of the orderlies behind me bespoke our never-ending homelessness. The clerks, sodden with sleeplessness, wrote orders to the division, ate pickles, and sneezed.

And here is a passage about the violin teacher, from "The Awakening":

> The door of the inner sanctum opened. Large-headed, freckled children came bustling out of Zagursky's chamber, their necks thin as flower stalks, a convulsive flush on their cheeks. Then the door closed, swallowing up the next dwarf. In the adjacent room Zagursky, with his red curls, bow tie, and thin legs, sang and conducted in ecstasy. The founder of this freakish lottery filled the Moldavanka and the back alleys of the old bazaar with *specters of pizzicato and cantilena.*

And here is the beginning of "Gedali":

> On the eve of the Sabbath I am always tormented by the dense sorrow of memory. In the past on these evenings, my grandfather's yellow beard caressed the volumes of Ibn Ezra. My old grandmother, in her lace bonnet, waved spells over the Sabbath candle with her gnarled fingers, and sobbed sweetly.

In each of these passages, every narrative proposition is seized as a picture. And this picture works by taking momentary extremity of emotion and rendering it as habitual. The picture distends and arrests time. Thus, the clerks are seen as writing, eating pickles, and sneezing all at the same time, in one sentence. Zagursky is seen as only singing and conducting in ecstasy, whereas there were presumably many unecstatic days. And the narrator's old grandmother is seen as habitually sobbing sweetly over the Sabbath candles, whereas in likelihood there were also some dry-eyed Sabbaths. (That last passage shows how closely this style of writing resembles Old Country sentimentality.)

IN HIS *DIARY*, Babel often makes a note to himself to "remember the picture." His style is clearly a painterly procedure, akin to the techniques of the vivid icons celebrated in his story "*Pan* Apolek." It is very powerful, in several different ways. It drops a single blot of essence onto the page, a potent pigment of activity. It is ideally suited to very short stories, and much less suited to the novel: if we only see Zagursky once, we had better see him bow-tied and conducting in ecstasy.

An atmosphere at once modern and antique is created, which may be the true novelty that we feel when reading Babel. He feels modern because detail is so interrupted and shaped and angled that it always seems the writer's own impression of detail, and hence has the feel of something recollected, something filtered through memory (it is close to the technique of stream of consciousness); but it

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seems antique, almost fable-like, because when human beings are frozen in sharp, habitual activities, they are made eternal, made into pieces of landscape and climate. Old grandmother forever sobbing over the Sabbath flame is necessarily at one with "the naked shine of the moon" and the many evocations of sunsets in Babel's work.

Melodrama thrives on this singleness; melodrama is really just the drama of singleness, and Babel's is certainly a perilous art. And painterliness is the cousin of aestheticism. Babel's exuberant literary friezes or icons are obsessed with the rendering of dynamic essences: Zagursky in ecstasy, grandmother sobbing, Auntie Bobka bouncing, Trunov plunging his saber into the Pole's throat, and so on. In Babel, character tends to be instantly converted into function, and emotion into activity. Do you want to see a clerk? Then I will show you him eating pickles and sneezing and saturated in sleeplessness. My grandmother? Here she is, sobbing over the candle.

In such a world of activity and function, the only possessor of inwardness, the only vessel of vulnerability, the only carrier of sensitivity, is the writer himself—and this represents the glorious, final, murderous triumph of style. Babel famously likened the writer to a man with spectacles on his nose and autumn in his heart. At times one wishes that he had hoarded that writerly autumn less jealously, and daubed his characters more generously with its complicating dapple. ■

Thorny of Thornies

By HILLEL HALKIN

Divided Jerusalem: The Struggle for the Holy City by Bernard Wasserstein

(Yale University Press, 412 pp., $29.95)

The Rock: A Tale of Seventh-Century Jerusalem by Kanan Makiya

(Pantheon, 349 pp., $26)

IT IS OFTEN said that, of the many problems standing in the way of an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement, Jerusalem is the most intractable. Such issues as the 1967 borders, the future of the Jewish settlements, the fate of the Palestinian refugees, Palestinian demilitarization, economic relations, water rights, and so on are all justly held to be thorny. Jerusalem, we are told, is the Thorny of Thornies.

The history of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority would appear to bear this out. On no other question have the positions of the two sides been further apart over the years; on no other question did the feverish peace talks—conducted during the last months of the Barak government, beginning at Camp David in the summer of 2000 and ending several months later in failure at Taba—founder so dramatically. The annexation of Arab Jerusalem, the first significant step taken by Israel after the 1967 war, continues to loom as perhaps the last hurdle to laying to rest that war's causes and consequences.

And yet there is no obvious reason why this need be so. Considered rationally, in fact, Jerusalem should be just about the easiest of all the major problems for Israelis and Palestinians to solve. Far more than the others, it is amenable to practical arrangements capable of satisfying the basic interests and emotions of both sides. Two new books about Jerusalem—one a rather pedestrian history and the other a rather artificial novel—can help us to think about the matter.

Let us go back one hundred fifty years. Jerusalem in the mid-nineteenth century, as described by Bernard Wasserstein, whose account skips quickly from early history to the modern period, was a small, "inward-looking, walled hill town," no larger than it had been when, as "an obscure, provincial backwater with a population of fewer than fifteen thousand," it was conquered by the Ottoman Turks from the Mamelukes in 1516. Occupying little more than two hundred acres, it stood entirely within the massive walls renovated during the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent (1520–1566), its roughly square shape divided into the four quarters—Muslim, Christian, Jewish, and Armenian—that its "old city" still consists of today.

Six thousand of its inhabitants were Jews, 5,400 were Muslims, 3,600 were Christians. Poor, rundown, and of little political or commercial importance, the city had been declared a district capital only thirteen years previously, having been governed until 1837 from Damascus. Its main landmarks and pilgrimage sites had not changed for hundreds or thousands of years: the "Wailing" or "Western" Wall of the Jews, the Holy Sepulchre of the Christians, the two great Muslim shrines on the Haram al-Sharif or Temple Mount. Rising above the Mount to the east, the dominating heights of Mount Scopus, the future home of the Hebrew University, and the Mount of Olives, with its old Jewish cemetery, stood desolate. The surrounding countryside, infested with brigands, was sparsely cultivated and unsafe.

But all this was deceptive. Not only was Jerusalem in 1850 on the verge of a rapid expansion that has continued unchecked to this day, the changes had already begun. The city was experiencing demographic growth, its population having regained its sixteenth-century level from a low of nine thousand in 1800, with nearly two-thirds of the newcomers—most religiously motivated immigrants from Eastern Europe—being Jews. It had also become, largely due to the introduction of regular steamship service to Palestine, a destination for wealthy Western tourists. By the 1830s, as Wasserstein observes, it was on the itinerary of "the Grand Tour," and by 1862 it had been visited by—among others—Benjamin Disraeli, the Archduke of Bavaria, the Duke of Brabant, the Russian Grand Duke Konstantin, and the Prince of Wales.

Spurred by the expected collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the European powers vied for spheres of influence in the city through the aggressive establishment of consulates, churches, and religious missions. The middle to late nineteenth century also witnessed—unremarked upon by Wasserstein, who sticks to the well-trodden paths of political and diplomatic history—a new vogue in Holy Land travel books, illustrated postcards, and memorabilia, all paying special attention to Jerusalem. Well-known landscape artists such

HILLEL HALKIN is a writer and translator living in Israel.

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as David Roberts, T. H. Horne, and David Wilkie painted the city extensively; the Frenchman Horace Vernet was photographing it by the daguerreotype process as early as 1835.

For the first time Jerusalem became, for millions of Europeans and Americans, a realistically visualizable place rather than a medieval set-piece of turrets and towers. It was a place, as portrayed in many of these books and albums, in which melancholy and exaltation clashed. "All the meanness and squalor of its degradation," wrote the British travel writer and illustrator Samuel Manning in 1873 of his first glimpse of the city from the Mount of Olives, "was lost in the radiance which veiled it."

THIS, TOO, WAS the Jerusalem pictured by Jews when, toward the end of the nineteenth century, Zionism proposed the city, which now had a Jewish majority, as the future capital of a modern Jewish state. It was the Jerusalem that unfavorably impressed Herzl, who wrote after seeing it in 1898:

> When I remember thee in days to come, O Jerusalem, it will not be with pleasure. The dank sediment of two millennia filled with inhumanity, intolerance, and filth fills [your] foul-smelling alleys.... But I am firmly convinced that a magnificent New Jerusalem could be erected outside the old city walls. Old Jerusalem would remain Lourdes and Mecca and Yerushalayim. A very handsome, elegant city next to it would be a real possibility.

And yet, while this New Jerusalem was emerging from the city's walls even as Herzl wrote, it was Old Jerusalem that continued to be depicted in Zionist iconography. In a famous photo montage produced after Herzl's death in 1904 and widely copied in posters, Zionist postage stamps, and even carpets, Herzl stands on a balcony (in fact he was looking down at the Rhine in Basel, where the picture was actually taken) and gazes at the old city ramparts and their "Tower of David" (in reality an Ottoman construction on Herodean foundations), behind which a many-rayed sun is rising; a column of Jewish pioneers, one turning to wave at him, marches up the barren hillside leading to the Jaffa Gate. The "handsome, elegant" new city of which he dreamed is nowhere in sight.

The Jerusalem dreamed of by the Jewish masses that had rallied around Herzl was the Yerushalayim inside the ramparts, *ir ba David hana*, "the city in which"—in the words of the Zionist anthem "Hatikvah"—"David dwelled" in an ancient and to-be-renewed golden age—although, as a matter of not-yet-known archaeological fact, David's city had lain outside Suleiman's walls, just to the south of them, on a slope partly occupied by the Arab village of Silwan, the biblical Shiloah or Siloam. Also curiously, the Temple Mount, the great raised plaza at the walled city's eastern end on which the Holy of Holies and its surrounding complex, first constructed by David's son Solomon, had stood until its destruction by the Romans in 70 C.E., never belonged to this dream.

It would be hard to find a single Zionist image of the Temple Mount from Herzl's time or long after. In part, this was because the monumental Muslim shrines that stood on it were unsuitable Zionist icons. But there was a deeper reason. The Jews, having no desire to repossess the Temple Mount, had no longing for it either. For secular Jews, the very thought of rebuilding the Temple with its cult of animal sacrifice, let alone tearing down revered Islamic edifices to do so, was embarrassing and absurd; and for religious Jews, it was the ultimate sacrilege.

God alone could restore His dwelling place to Jerusalem in messianic times. Indeed, observant Jews were barred by religious law from even ascending to the Mount, since the cultic means of purification required for this no longer existed. Moreover, the *Shekhinah*, God's mystical presence that had dwelled in the Temple, was gone from the Mount. Fleeing when the Temple went up in flames, the holy spirit now sheltered (according to Jewish legend and popular belief) at the Wailing Wall, the western segment of the great retaining bulwark built around the Mount by Herod as part of the extensive renovations executed during his reign shortly before the birth of Jesus.

IN 638, SOON after the death of Muhammad, when the Arab army of Omar ibn Khatib took Jerusalem from the Byzantines, the city was not enormously different from what it was to be in 1500 or 1850. On its northern, western, and eastern sides, its walls followed the future lines of the Turkish ones; only to the south were they more extensive, encompassing Mount Zion and the archaeological city of David. But the most noticeable difference to the observer looking down from the Mount of Olives or Mount Scopus would not have been the city's walls. It would have been the Temple Mount, on which he would have seen neither the golden Dome of the Rock that is now Jerusalem's worldwide logo, nor its companion, the silver-domed Al-Aqsa Mosque for which the Palestinians have named their current uprising, but rather the rubble of the Temple destroyed six hundred years earlier by the Romans and largely buried under centuries of municipal garbage.

The Mount and the Dome are the subject of Kanan Makiya's *The Rock*, a novel set in Jerusalem at the time of the Arab conquest. Slight as a work of fiction, its characters transparent personifications of religious ideas and geopolitical forces, the book is nevertheless very absorbing; for these forces and ideas, known today as "the rise of Islam," "the early Umayyad Caliphate," and so on, are arrested for us by Makiya in the process of coming into being. He has described them at that formative stage of events in which future history seems pure potential.

Islam, the last of the three great monotheistic faiths, was greatly influenced by Judaism and Christianity, and Makiya's project in his book is to take the Jewish and Christian concepts of the sacredness of Jerusalem and examine how these affected the new religion, whether by being adopted by it in order to stress its continuity with its predecessors or by being rejected so as to emphasize its uniqueness. Was Jerusalem to be the holy city for Muslims—even though their sacred history had not taken place in it—that it was for Jews and, to a lesser degree, for Christians? Or was it superseded by Mecca, the place of Muhammad's birth and most of his revelations? And more specifically, in which direction was a Muslim to pray—facing, as the Jews did, Jerusalem and the Temple Mount, with its "Rock of the Foundation" on which Abraham supposedly bound Isaac, or facing the Ka'ba in Mecca and its "Black Stone," given by God to Adam according to one Islamic tradition, and given to Ishmael according to another tradition?

That this was a practical problem for early Muslims is clear from the Koran, which reveals that they actually did face Jerusalem in prayer until Muhammad ordered a change in Mecca's favor. Indeed, when Jerusalem fell to Omar ibn Khatib, there were still Muslims who made a point of praying toward the Ka'ba *and* the Temple Mount by aligning themselves with both. Moreover, as Makiya points out in one of the many footnotes to *The Rock* that are often as interesting as the text itself, some scholars have argued that Abd-al-Malik, the fifth Umayyad Caliph (685–705), who commissioned the construction of the Dome of the Rock in the place where the Temple had stood, wished to substitute it for the Ka'ba, and Jerusalem for Mecca, in order to bring the religious center of Islam nearer to his seat of power in Damascus.

The Rock is narrated by Ishaq ibn Ka'b, the fictional son of an actual historical figure named Ka'b al-Ahbar, a seventh-century Yemenite Jew and early convert to

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Islam. Little is known about Ka'b apart from his being said by his Muslim contemporaries to have introduced much Jewish lore into the Islamic *hadith*, or oral tradition, and to have been offered, and turned down, the post of adviser to the first Umayyad Caliph, Mu'awiya. Although Islam later opposed Jewish thematics, known in Arabic as *isra'iliyat*, it was initially, Makiya writes in a "Historical Note on Ka'b," more open to them. In his novel, which is in part a meditation on the fudged possibilities of this openness, Ka'b represents a missed moment in history: the unseized chance for a Judeo-Islamic synthesis or pan-Semitic monotheism that would have chosen, as Ka'b urges it to, Jerusalem over Mecca.

It is easy to dismiss such a vision as an anachronistic historical pipe dream, a projection onto the past of the contemporary fantasy of a joint Jewish-Arab "children of Abraham" identity that might put an end to the conflict in the Middle East. Makiya himself, in all fairness, does not push the point, which in Ishaq's musings is never more than a wistfully considered path-not-taken that might never have led very far. Mecca's predominance was never seriously challenged by Jerusalem, and as Makiya notes in *The Rock*, it takes a wide range of factors—religious, political, commercial, and sometimes nationalistic—to determine the importance of a sacred site. Early Christian Jerusalem treated the Temple Mount as a garbage dump because, despoiled and degraded, it represented the ruin of Judaism and the fulfillment of New Testament prophecies concerning the Temple's destruction. When Constantine sought to revive the city's religious centrality as part of the eastward shift that saw him move his capital from Rome to Constantinople, he had his mother Helena conveniently discover the "True Cross," the instrument of his crucifixion supposedly borne by Jesus, and he commissioned the construction of the Holy Sepulchre on the site. The new Christian shrine, to which others soon were added, turned a Jerusalem hitherto neglected by the Romans into a prosperous diocese that drew pilgrims, the tourists of the ancient world, from as far as France.

Similarly, when Abd-al-Malik—or, in Makiya's story, Ishak ibn Ka'b acting on Abd-al-Malik's behalf—built the Dome of the Rock, Islam, too, sought and found a religious validation for this: the newly invented belief that a vaguely footprint-shaped indentation in the "Rock of Foundation" belonged to Muhammad, made by him on his famous "night journey" from Mecca to Heaven. And by the same token, when—jumping forward more than a millennium—tensions in Palestine mounted in the 1920s between Jews and Muslims, the latter, who had never before taken any religious interest in the Western Wall, now sought to claim it by attaching to it the legend of Muhammad's horse Buraq, allegedly tethered there during the night journey—even though, as Wasserstein points out, Buraq's hitching post was traditionally believed to have been elsewhere.

In general, Muslim interest in and glorification of Jerusalem has waxed and waned over the centuries in concert with the city's being contested by Christians or Jews. It was great in the early years of the Arab conquest; slackened and then mounted again at the time of the Crusades; and declined afterwards to surge anew with the advent of Zionism, and especially with the loss of Arab Jerusalem to Israel in 1967. In the polemics between Israel and the Arab world over the place of Jerusalem in Islam, both sides have therefore been right.

The Arabs' assertion that their attachment to Jerusalem is old, historically fervent, and firmly rooted in Muslim tradition is incontestable; but so, too, is the Jewish assertion that this attachment never sufficed, economically or politically, to make Jerusalem a ranking city in the Muslim world. As soon as the threat to it passed, so did its prominence. At bottom, despite its Arabic name of Al-Quds, "the Holy," it was not so much Jerusalem that was sanctified by Islam as it was the Haram al-Sharif, the "noble sanctuary" of the Temple Mount. It was not so much a returning golden age to which Muslim eyes were turned, but a golden dome on a sacred expanse of stone that Jews mourned for and, deep in their hearts, were thankful not to be the masters of.

THE WALL, THEN, to the Jews, and the Mount to the Palestinians. What could be simpler? It is indeed a mystery why a highly pragmatic politician such as Ehud Barak, while making great concessions on issues unrelated to Jerusalem, insisted in his negotiations with the Palestinian Authority on total or partial Israeli sovereignty over the Temple Mount, even reportedly proposing the bizarre solution of Jewish control below ground level and Arab control above it. Apart from the archaeological lobby, eager to dig for Temple treasure, and fringe groups of right-wing messianists impatient "to force the End," in the disapproving rabbinic phrase, the great majority of Israelis, religious and secular, would willingly have swapped the Mount for the Wall and been relieved to be rid of it.

Of course, the Old City of Jerusalem is more than just the Temple Mount and the Western Wall. It is an extensive maze of streets, alleyways, homes, shops, markets,

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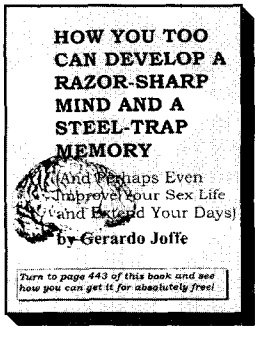
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mosques, churches, synagogues, and real or mythical sites of historical and religious importance. Yet fairly apportioning all this would not be difficult either. History has already done the work. Most of the Old City's five thousand Christians and nearly all of its twenty-two thousand Muslims live in the Christian and Muslim quarters, where Christianity and Islam have their holy sites and institutions; close to ninety percent of its twenty-five hundred Jews live in the Jewish Quarter, of which the same can be said for Judaism; and its two thousand Armenians, who of all Jerusalem's Christians have the best ties with Israel, would probably prefer belonging to the latter. This would create a symmetrical and quite workable division, with half the walled city and one of its two main gates (the Damascus, which faces the Arab downtown) in Palestinian hands, and the other half and main gate (the Jaffa, which faces the Jewish downtown) in Israeli hands. The border, freely crossable, would run from west to east along David Street, the Old City's main bazaar, the Palestinian side to the north of it and the Israeli side to the south. Essentially the plan presented to Barak and Arafat by President Clinton at Camp David, this would have the virtue of once again giving each side what mattered most to it while denying to it only what did not.

The new city is more complicated. Far larger, if less elegant, than the city of Herzl's dream, it is an amalgam of neighborhoods that, starting in the 1860s, spread outward from the Old City walls, the Jewish ones in an arc from northwest to southwest, the Arab ones mainly from northeast to southeast; of outlying villages and refugee camps that were engulfed by these; of huge Israeli housing projects built on land occupied in 1967; and of Palestinian population centers growing toward them. All this has created a single metropolitan region from Bethlehem in the south to Ramallah in the north, some three hundred square kilometers in area and having a population of nearly one million, close to three-quarters of it within the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem that were greatly expanded by Israel after the Six Day War. As opposed to the pre-war situation, when Jews lived in the west of the divided city and Arabs in the east, a crazy-quilt pattern now prevails in much of it.

And yet here, too, why not—as the Americans also proposed at Camp David—give the Arab neighborhoods to Palestine and the Jewish ones to Israel? Under conditions of genuine peace, easily despaired of at the moment but nevertheless imaginable, two adjacent streets, one patrolled by Israeli and one by Palestinian police, or one having its garbage collected by East Jerusalem and one by West Jerusalem, would be no stranger than similar arrangements between New York and Connecticut or Brooklyn and Queens. True, this would mean, for the Palestinians, accepting permanent Israeli annexation of parts of Jerusalem, and, for Israel, "re-dividing" Jerusalem, as every Israeli government since 1967 has sworn not to do. But what, really, is Jerusalem? To consider it every patch of now built-up Judean countryside that one hundred fifty, fifty, or even thirty years ago was thought by no one to be part of the city is to be ruled by words and lines on maps. The area now defined as Jerusalem is no more the Jerusalem historically yearned for by Jews and militantly defended by Muslims than is Jericho (which Jerusalem's eastern suburbs may yet reach) or Tel Aviv (soon to be half an hour away from downtown Jerusalem by train). There is a need to disassociate perfectly legitimate Jewish and Arab emotions about the city from the urban sprawl that has come to bear its name.

Certainly, in terms of military security, which must be Israel's first concern in any peace agreement, letting the Palestinians have nearly all of Arab Jerusalem is not a problem. As long as Mount Scopus and the Mount of Olives are retained by Israel, it controls the high ground dominating not only the city to the west but also the terrain falling away to the Jordan Valley in the east. And demographically, Israel, which must in the long run maintain a clear Jewish majority if it is not to lapse into chaotic bi-national conflict, has everything to gain by parting from the over two hundred thousand Palestinians now living in Jerusalem, most as Israeli citizens.

Indeed, as Wasserstein writes, although the Jewish population of the city has more than doubled since 1967, from 196,000 to close to 500,000, the Arab population has more than tripled. (So much for the Palestinian accusation that Israel has ruthlessly "Judaized" the city!) In fact, it is the increase of Jews (as has been the case in Palestine since the earliest Zionist settlement) that has caused the increase of Arabs, who have flocked to Jerusalem to take advantage of the economic opportunities created by rapid growth.

The Palestinians must have their half of Jerusalem. Although they can afford to back down on other issues, no Palestinian state can be viable geographically or economically without Jerusalem as its capital. Had Israeli negotiating positions, starting with Oslo, been more rational, they would have been the very opposite of what they were over the years and in Barak's last months: softer on Jerusalem and harder on other issues, such as permanent Israeli military control of the Jordan Valley, for which Jerusalem could have been used as a bargaining chip. But beginning with the euphoria of 1967, Israeli policy on Jerusalem has been anything but rational. It has been determined by emotional and symbolic thinking far more than policy on the settlements, many of which are more crucial to long-term Israeli interests than is a "greater Jerusalem."

Once a year in midsummer, on the fast day of the Ninth of Av, Jews mourn the destruction of the Temple. At the time the state of Israel was declared, it was proposed by some religious Zionists that, the restoration of Jewish independence having made up for the terrible loss of it at the hands of the Romans two thousand years earlier, the fast should be abolished. In religious circles, however, this suggestion was never taken very seriously. For it was not the loss of independence that the fast day commemorated—Judea had not been really independent before the Great Revolt against Rome either—but the loss of God's at-homeness in the world. If the Jews are now at home again, they have Israel to thank; but God's exile, for believing Jews, persists. This exile is metaphysical, and earthly arrangements cannot put an end to it. No disrespect is intended toward Islam if one says that, for a Jew, a bare wall at which, under an open sky, God's presence shelters means that the golden and silver domes must belong to others. ■

Mask

I tied a paper mask onto my face,
my lips almost inside its small red mouth.
Turning my head to the left, to the right,
I looked like someone I once knew, or was,
with straight white teeth and boyish bangs.
My ordinary life had come as far as it would,
like a white arrow hitting cypress.
Know your place or you'll rue it, I sighed
to the mirror. To succeed, I'd done things
I hated; to be loved, I'd competed promiscuously:
my essence seemed to boil down to only this.
Then I saw my own hazel irises float up,
like eggs clinging to a water plant,
seamless and clear, in an empty, pondlike face.

Henri Cole

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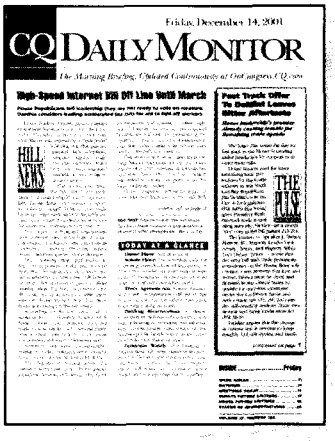

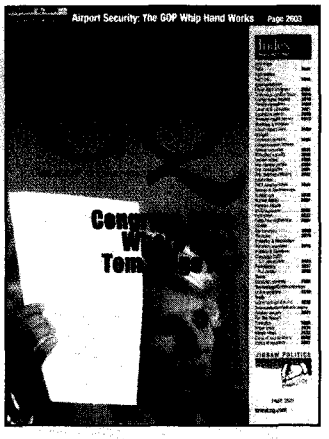

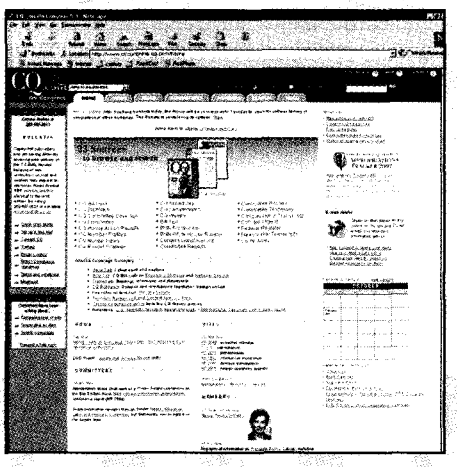

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HALLELUJAH! CARDINAL Joseph Ratzinger has affixed his hallowed name to a document that proclaims that "the Jewish wait for the Messiah is not in vain." Myself, I am not so sure: it is not a coincidence, I think, that in Judaism the history of messianism is the history of false messianism. The Jewish reluctance to be redeemed is philosophically shrewd, a kind of spiritual cunning that spares us the most bruising disappointment of all, and stops our future from devouring our present. (We are less skilled at holding our past at bay.) But I am sure, I am stiff-neckedly sure, that Ratzinger's latest opinion about Judaism is a matter of no consequence for me, or for any self-respecting Jew. Tell it to Nahmanides. There is something insulting even about Ratzinger's good moods. His new line on the legitimacy of Jewish messianism is merely an unexpectedly pleasant form of the theological condescension that the Vatican has always evinced toward Judaism, most recently in *Dominus Iesus*, which candidly instructed that "the prayers and the rituals of the other religions" are lacking in "a divine origin or an *ex opere operato* salvific efficacy." I was not startled by the Church's announcement that it is the only way to heaven, though I was amused by its conceit that its own absoluteness is the sole answer to contemporary relativism, as if the only alternatives that present themselves to the thoughtful people of the world are Rorty and Ratzinger. I understand why the Vatican might wish to reflect on its dealings with the Jews; but this is a conversation that it should have with itself, not with the Jews. We have nothing to contribute to such a conversation: no vindication to confer, no absolution to grant, no gratitude to give. We find even the memory of our oppression oppressive, or some of us do. Conscience is an interior faculty. It "dialogues" with itself, when it is in earnest. The clouded conscience of the Catholic Church with respect to the Jews is not a Jewish problem. All the Jews ever did was profess what they believed to be true, whether it was a medieval doctrine of redemption or a modern doctrine of liberty. And they lacked the power to coerce or to punish those who espoused the opposite of what they believed. Their powerlessness was not precisely a stroke of luck, of course; but still I give thanks that the Lord of the Universe in His infinite wisdom unburdened us of the Temple and the Sanhedrin that sat adjacent to it. We, too, are only human.

I HAVE ALWAYS DISLIKED THE WORD "smear." It is a metaphor for itself, since its use dirties a discussion. "Smear" is the term to which one repairs when one lacks a satisfactory response to an accusation, and so one chooses to politicize the subject. Call a charge a smear and you have elided the question of its truth. You have divided the world into camps, and replaced criticism with solidarity. Last week Andrew Sullivan alleged on this page that Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's recent essay on the Catholic Church and the Holocaust was a "smear." Sullivan does not appear to know terribly much about the history of Catholicism's entanglement with the Jews, beyond what he took away from a reading of James Carroll's noble but not erudite book. Sullivan does not write like a man who has pondered the texts of the pertinent decretals, though he impugns Goldhagen for his "use of other people's scholarship." Instead he congratulates himself on being a "Catholic with a conscience" and snarls.

A LITTLE "OTHER PEOPLE'S SCHOLARship" would do Sullivan a lot of good. Consider his tired rehearsal of the conventional distinction between the medieval anti-Semitism of theology and the modern anti-Semitism of race. This discontinuity of hateful ideas—which "most scholars acknowledge," Sullivan observes with a journalist's authority—has long served an apologetic aim. The Popes propounded the one variety of hatred, the Nazis propounded the other variety of hatred, and so the former could have shared no purpose with the latter. End of story. Back to brunch. It appears that nobody invited Sullivan to review David Kertzer's book, for its news has not reached him. What Kertzer has established in *The Popes Against The Jews: The Vatican's Role in the Rise of Modern Anti-Semitism*, by means of archival research, is the bitter fact that the modern Vatican trafficked in racial Jew-hatred of the most repulsive kind. Whether or not medieval anti-Judaism and modern anti-Semitism go together intellectually, they went together historically. The Church that denounced racism also resorted to it. And it is a debater's point to plead that racial anti-Semitism was not "Catholic doctrine," because it is the culture of the Vatican that is the issue. Religions have many instruments. They teach many things in many ways. And if it is "Catholic doctrine" to which an indictment of the Vatican must appeal, then why exactly does Sullivan get sanctimonious about Goldhagen's statement that the Catholic Church was "centrally animated by the notion that all Jews were Christ-killers"? That fateful hallucination was not only doctrinal, it was also scriptural.

GOLDHAGEN'S ARGUMENT, IN SULLIvan's account of it, was that "there was no relevant moral difference between Catholicism and Nazism in the 1930s and 1940s." This is wild. Is it really necessary to say that it was Nazism and not Catholicism that murdered the Jews? OK, then, go to edit and hit copy: it was Nazism and not Catholicism that murdered the Jews. Now can we be serious? Allies and collaborators may be distinguished by many differences. All that matters, if they are to be allies and collaborators, is that they have something in common. Goldhagen contended that the Catholic Church under Pius XII conducted itself like Nazi Germany's ally and collaborator in the dooming of the Jews. This is not a hateful slur, it is a sorrowful argument. It is right or it is wrong, but it is not anti-Catholic; and the suggestion that it is anti-Catholic is a cheap attempt to shut the mind down.

THERE IS A DROLL MOMENT IN SULLIvan's slandering of the messenger. It appears in his discussion of "the ancient slur that the papacy is an instrument of the anti-Christ." Goldhagen is guilty of this slur, you see, because if Hitler may be said to have been the anti-Christ, and the Vatican may be said to have abetted Hitler, then the Vatican may be said to have abetted the anti-Christ. This is a textbook example of the casuistry of insulted identity. "The anti-Christ, huh?" Sullivan continues. "The last time I heard that was when I was being jeered in my Protestant high school in England." Now there is an atrocity! Forgive me, but if we are going to get atavistic, I must point out that the people who were most ravaged by the appellation "anti-Christ" were, well, yes, the Jews. We win again. And if we are going to get autobiographical, I must recall that when I was a yarmulked youth I had the epithet hurled in my face on Coney Island Avenue and Avenue P, though I did not conclude that the tenebrous history of my faith and my people had thereby climaxed in me. (I remember consoling myself with the thought that I am safe in America, and also with the thought that I certainly am not pro-Christ.) I have spoken to a number of Catholic friends about the pain that Goldhagen's essay caused them. They all have their animadversions, but none of them has accused an unbigoted man of bigotry. Why can't we just hate Hitler together?

LEON WIESELTIER

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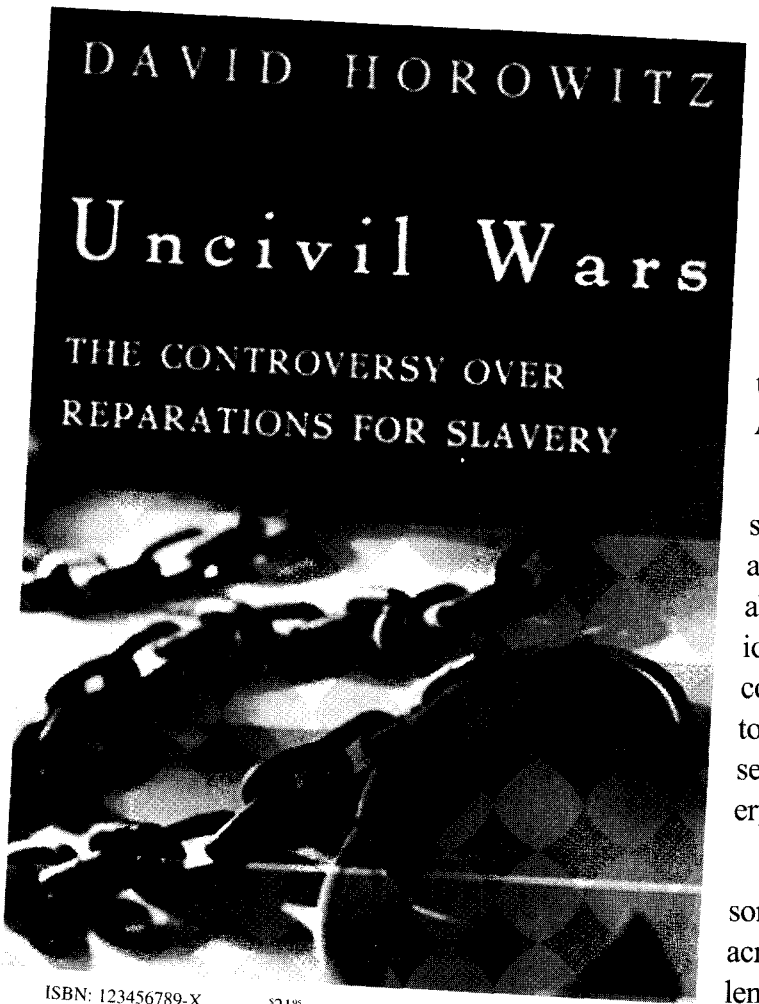
Reparations and 9/11



Two months after the World Trade Center attack, Atlanta mayor Bill Campbell welcomed 700 attendees to the "State of the Black World Conference" with this applause line: "While the rest of the world waves the flag of Americana, we understand we are not part of that." Al Sharpton then told the throng: "We don't owe America anything; America owes us."

These outbursts expose a racial fissure in the body politic as deep as the ambivalence felt by some black citizens about their identity as Americans. The idea that blacks owe nothing to their country while America owes everything to them is the core theme of a movement seeking reparations for the crime of slavery, committed more than a century ago.

Last year, in a campaign met by censorship and angry protests at colleges across the nation, David Horowitz challenged the reparations claim with these self-evident truths: America gave birth to the idea that all men are created equal, paid a heavy price to end slavery, and has made generous payment on its debt to African Americans alive today. America deserves the gratitude of all its citizens--including blacks--for rights and privileges the sacrifices of their countrymen have made possible.

Now comes **UNCIVIL WARS,** Horowitz's book about these events. This remarkable work is the most searching look yet at the intellectual and moral bankruptcy of the reparations idea. It is also a searing report on the imperiled status of free speech at American universities, describing the extraordinary effort it took one man to get a simple hearing for ideas vital to our national debate. As Black History Month approaches, **UNCIVIL WARS** demands a place on the calendar.

David Horowitz has written a *J'Accuse* about the reign of terror by racial demogogues on American college campuses, and a patriotic hymn to one nation indivisible--blacks and whites together--with liberty and justice for all.

Available in bookstores. To order (800) 752-6562
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School Reform: Stay the Course

Diane Ravitch is a research professor, New York University; distinguished visiting fellow, Hoover Institution; and member, Hoover's Koret Task Force on K–12 Education.

Americans are famous for demanding instant results. Real school reform, however, takes time. **Massachusetts embarked on a reform strategy in 1993, and only now is the state seeing results.**

In 1993, the state legislature agreed to add $1 billion annually to education funding, with the expectation that students would thus be prepared to pass new state examinations ten years later. After developing new standards and tests, the state began testing students on a trial basis in 1998.

Tenth-grade students were required to pass state tests (known as MCAS, for the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System) in mathematics and English to qualify for a high school diploma. Those who failed had four additional chances to retake the tests.

The early returns of state testing were terrible. Half the tenth graders failed the math test, and a third failed the English test. The failure rates were even higher for minority students. Critics began attacking the reforms, charging that they stifled teachers' creativity and, worse, endangered minority youth, who might be denied a diploma. The Massachusetts Teachers Association launched a $600,000 advertising campaign against state testing, and the state's local school boards urged lawmakers to repeal the requirement that students pass the exams to graduate.

But state officials held firm. Their persistence was rewarded this fall when the results of the 2001 tests were made public. Knowing that this was the first time that the tests counted for graduation, tenth-graders took them seriously. Remarkably, the failure rate on the math test dropped from 45 percent in 2000 to 25 percent in 2001 and from 34 percent to 18 percent in English.

Minority students showed significant progress. The failure rate of African American tenth graders fell from 60 percent to 40 percent in English and from 77 percent to 52 percent in mathematics. Among Hispanic students, the failure rate dropped from 66 percent to 48 percent in English and from 79 percent to 58 percent in mathematics.

Many of those who failed received marks that were just below passing. With more effort and study, they will pass on their next try. The state has created remedial programs to help those who failed, and teachers know that they have a specific pool of youngsters who need extra help to master English and mathematics. With each retake of the tests, the number of students who fail will grow smaller.

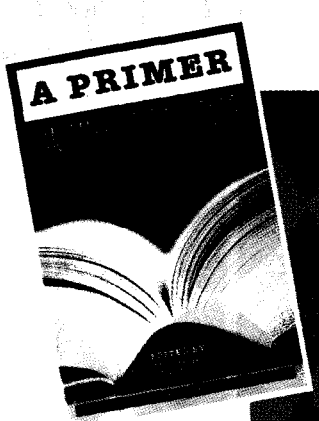
The Massachusetts tests, it must be noted, are among the most challenging in the nation. The math tests are rigorous assessments of problem-solving skills, and the English tests have many essay questions based on excellent literature.

Massachusetts has begun to reap the rewards of standards-based reform. **The state bet that students could meet high expectations, and it backed up its bet with serious new funding and excellent tests.** State officials passed their own test, enduring a barrage of criticism and predictions of disaster.

The real winners in Massachusetts are the students. From now on, their diplomas will signify that they have mastered important knowledge and skills and that they are ready for college and the modern workplace.

— Diane Ravitch

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.



Want to learn more about K–12 education policy?

Visit us on-line at* www.hoover.org *or contact us to receive a complimentary copy of* A Primer on America's Schools—*11 chapters by Hoover's Koret Task Force on K–12 Education.

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